

HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS

Parents Are Making Lists And Checking Them Twice For Creative Toys

(NAPSA)—As kids compile their annual holiday wish list, they might be surprised to know that Mom and Dad are sneaking in a few gift requests of their own. A survey from Silver Stork Research found that the majority of parents (66 percent) plan to buy more creative toys for their kids.

What's Mom and Dad's explanation for this change in holiday strategy? It's simple—with kids spending more and more time hooked up to computers and running from activity to activity, parents are worried that a valuable piece of their children's development is being compromised: their imagination.

Most of the parents surveyed said they would like to see their children using their imagination more during playtime, with 75 percent ranking this imaginative playtime as important as school.

"Parents recognize the power of play, particularly when it comes to toys they believe foster their children's imagination," explains the survey's director, Marta Loeb of Silver Stork Research. "In addition, a new generation of parents are determined to be more involved in their children's lives. When it comes to playtime, this means choosing toys and games that will expand their child's horizon."

This emphasis on bringing cre-



ativity to the playroom is also explained in the finding that parents see a direct correlation between imagination and learning—with almost three-quarters of mothers polled saying that the more children use their imagination, the better they will perform in school.

Another reason may be that dads report feeling at their best as fathers when playing with their children, something that can happen more easily with creative and construction toys such as clay, crayons, or Lego bricks. To help, fun family play activities are listed on a new Web site called www.legobuildersoftomorrow.com.

"Playtime is a natural, easy time for dads to both connect with their children and unplug from the stress of their work lives," says Loeb. Apparently, Mom feels the same way, with over half of moms surveyed reporting that they play more with their child



when playtime doesn't involve electronics.

Parents and experts agree that creative play is important for developing kids' social and cognitive skills. It's proven that through play, children develop and refine their imagination, curiosity and creativity. This holiday season, Mom and Dad can help to foster creativity in their children by giving gifts that give them room to flex their creative muscles and imagination. Perhaps now more than ever, doing so can be a gift that will last a lifetime.