

Fisher-Price® Launches Toddlers' Interactive Learning Toy With Microsoft®

Intelli-Table™ Debuts at FAO Schwarz, Bringing Imbedded Technology to Babies !

NEW YORK (June 29, 2000) – Fisher-Price today launched the first toy ever to allow toddlers - as young as 9 months old! - to be exposed to interactive learning away from the computer. Fisher-Price collaborated with Microsoft to bring “imbedded technology” to children’s learning through a stand-alone, progressive learning toy. The Intelli-Table, developed with Microsoft® Smart Technology, marks a revolution in the way kids learn and play through self-directed discovery. The “imbedded technology” that has been utilized in products to improve adult productivity, such as hand held computers, is now bringing greater depth of content and interaction to children’s toys, such as the Intelli-Table.

Today, renowned developmental psychologist Erik Strommen, Ph.D., who has researched the use of technology in learning and developed the product while at Microsoft, helped launch the Intelli-Table in FAO Schwarz’s New York City flagship store, via live satellite from FAO’s Seattle store. The first Intelli-Table toys in the nation are being sold exclusively at FAO Schwarz, rolling out to mass market toy retailers later next month. Dr. Kathleen Alfano, an expert in the field of early childhood education, treated FAO Schwarz visitors in New York to an open Intelli-Table “play group” with Dr. Strommen online from Seattle for an open mike “Q & A.”

The Intelli-Table impressed toy insiders and technology writers alike at its Toy Fair unveiling last February. James A. Martin of PCWorld.com said, “Microsoft brings its software and hardware expertise to the Intelli-Table, while Fisher-Price adds its years of experience in developing early-childhood toys.”

“Smart toys with carefully created, rich content and interactions are the way of the future; they take software-driven play experiences away from the computer. And improved technology means improved interaction that changes with the child as he grows, so that the learning experience is richer,” says Dr. Strommen.

The Intelli-Table was designed to reinvent interactive learning for toddlers and young children (9 months to three-years-old) by emphasizing open-ended creative play, discovery and exploration rather than repetitive, rote learning. The Smart Technology provides children with a self-directed way to learn – allowing them to find new challenges at their own pace, as they grow – inspiring a child to want to learn more, versus simple “push button/response” interaction.

Each of three, inter-changeable play and learn rings offers self-directed learning in three areas: early learning basics, music and educational games. Packed with motivating sounds, music, lighted graphics and activities, the rings offer discoveries that advance with a child’s learning experience. The basics ring includes counting, the alphabet, animal names and sounds, nursery rhyme tunes and more than 50 words for a growing vocabulary. The music ring presents 30 children’s tunes and ways for youngsters to create their own music, using five different instruments (tuba, violin, piano, banjo and trombone) and five musical styles. Finally the third ring provides fun-filled educational games that teach memory and matching skills, reasoning skills, and delight growing minds with lighted patterns, sounds and music. The Intelli-Table is a progressive learning center where children can direct the learning, and control magical lights and sounds through their own actions. It contains a depth of learning and variety of play that is almost limitless!

“Analysts agree that toy companies will be more successful if they use technology to serve an education purpose or enhance a child’s play experience,” according to Catherine Valenti, ABCNEWS.com. And, toy industry insiders concur that children are the real winners. “They respond faster, and their senses are heightened,” says Terri Bartlett, TMA spokeswoman, in The New York Times.

“The imbedded technology in the Intelli-Table leads children to discover new experiences on their own, while they’re learning,” said Fran C. Blumberg, Assistant Professor, Educational Psychology program in the Graduate School of Education, Fordham University. “And, the fact that the technology in the Intelli-Table is interesting enough for a parent should not be understated. It’s rare to find a toy that both parent and child can enjoy together.”

“Infants and preschoolers don’t know what technology is – in fact, they can’t even pronounce it,” says Neil Friedman, President of Fisher-Price Brands. “But this technology allows us to create the ultimate discovery toy, with truly interactive play experiences that are new each time the child plays with the toy. For kids, that’s magic.”

Fisher-Price, Inc. located in East Aurora, New York, is the leading brand of infant and preschool toys in the world. Now celebrating 70 years of excellence in children’s products, some of Fisher-Price’s most popular “classic” toy lines include Little People®, Magna Doodle®, Power Wheels® and View-Master®. The Company also develops and markets an extensive line of juvenile products such as nursery monitors and car seats that help families get the best possible start in life. The Fisher-Price brand includes some of the most popular and widely recognized character brands – from Bear in the Big Blue House™, Blues’ Clues™ and Disney, to Muppets, Sesame Street® and Winnie the Pooh. Fisher-Price is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Mattel, Inc.