



Constructionism and Other Interesting Ideas to Share

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This newsletter, we hope, gives you some useful information to help you understand franchising and, in particular, opportunities in the educational services franchise business space. The after-school educational market exceeded \$60 billion in the U.S. in 2005 and continues to grow at a near double digit pace. So please enjoy and let us know what other topics you would like us to discuss.

About Us

At CTWorkshop creative thinking is a child's greatest asset. Since 1997 we've delivered hi-tech programs enabling children to enhance their innate creativity. We facilitate and extend a child's awesome natural ability to learn.

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If you have visited the Children's Technology website in the past, and in particular, the section on Franchising, you read about the methodology of constructivism, first described by Jean Piaget, and subsequently enhanced by seminal thinkers such as Dr. Seymour Papert. Constructivism talks about knowledge coming from experience, hence experiential learning. But Papert takes constructivism and ratchets it up a notch using a practical education methodology, namely computers and LEGO®.

Constructionism is learning through building things. Papert sees the evolution of the computer as fundamental to the progressive change in a child's relationship with knowledge. To Papert this is as fundamental to knowledge as the invention of written language. In this future world, no longer that distant from his 1996 writings in *The Connected Family*, Papert sees virtual reality machines, interactive video and electronic books.

In the world of constructionism, children learn mathematics because they want to learn it to help them build a LEGO model or a video game. The reliance on instruction goes away because of self motivation. But the learning really takes hold when the child has to share the end product of his creation and explain it to others. By talking to and with others the learner reinforces the learning.

Think about explaining the facts of life to your child. To do this you read psychologists, you look at diagrams, you talk to other parents and ask them how they approached the subject, you prepare notes, draw diagrams, and in the process you probably learn a lot more about "the facts." It's the thinking hard about the subject and how to convey this information to others that is the final reinforcement to the entire learning construct.

Children's Technology Workshop gives children a first-hand experience with this method of learning. If you want to learn more about constructionism, read *Constructionism in Practice: Designing, Thinking and Learning in a Digital World*, edited by Yasmin Kafai and Mitchel Resnick. You can find this book on Amazon.com.

At Children's Technology Workshop we are committed to giving children a vision of their future. But there are many other ways of helping kids and families in the developing world find their future. One way is Kiva.org. Kiva is about providing micro-loans to entrepreneurs in countries where capital is scarce. At Kiva.org you can sponsor a business idea with as little as a \$25 loan. You, along with others like you, pool capital for projects that may cost from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. The loan recipient pays you back usually in twelve months. Kiva.org partners with existing micro-financing institutions. These institutions identify qualified borrowers. These borrowers provide their ideas and profile on the Kiva.org website and you have the opportunity to choose with whom you invest and the amount. Kiva.org to date has experienced repayment rates of 99.8%. If this is a cause that appeals to you then go to the website at www.kiva.org to learn more.