

TOP 10 TOYS KID-TESTED BY THORNTON PRESCHOOLERS

By Monte Whaley • December 17, 2011



Abby Gabbard, 4, plays with Bristle Blocks in her classroom Thursday at the Goddard School in Thornton. This fall, Goddard preschoolers tested more than 100 submissions by major toy companies to get a fix on the best educational toys. [story, 3B](#) | [video of the toy testing, denverpost.com/extras](#) (Mahala Gaylord, The Denver Post)

Four-year-old Payton DeBelle is one discerning customer of toys, and she considers the Hoot Owl Hoot game one of the best she's encountered.

"You get owls, and you get to move the owl, and then you get to pick another card," said Payton, eyes gleaming over the paper owl heads staring back at her. "I want my own owl card."

Payton was one of several preschoolers at the Goddard School in Thornton who recently made their voices heard about which games they like the best. Those games are now in store shelves around the country after earning a place on the "Top 10 Preschooler-Approved Toys for 2011" list.

In all, 20 Goddard schools nationally tested more than 100 toys and games submitted by major toy companies. The toys were placed in classrooms of mostly preschoolers for their consideration.

A school being picked as a toy-testing ground is an honor, as there are more than 300 Goddard School franchises, said PJ Sautter, co-owner of the Thornton branch.

Schools were selected according to test performance and other evaluations. The Thornton branch was the only Colorado school chosen, Sautter said.

The toys were placed in classrooms for a week. The ones chosen were those that were interactive and quickly attracted the eyes and imaginations of the children, school co-director Amanda Naylor said.

"They were toys that also allowed teachers to ask open-ended questions," said Taylor. "We also wanted to see if the toys were something the children chose to go back to."

It also helped if the toys encouraged social skills and cooperation, she said. In addition, the toys needed to be appropriate for infants through age 6.

A game that didn't make the cut was a bead-lacing activity, Taylor said. "You laced about four beads, the project was over."

Teacher Gabi Rusch said Payton was mixing her fun with learning, as she tried to match up colors to collect enough owls to win the game.

"She's definitely learning color recognition, and she's learning to take turns with the other players," said

Rusch. “It also helps she’s having a good time.”

The top 10

The kids voted after a week of playing with the toys, and the results from 20 schools were submitted to Goddard officials. The top 10 toys — and the toy company:

- Animal Sounds Hay Ride (Learning Curve)
- Bristle Block Stackadoos (B. Toys by Battat)
- Citiblocs Camouflage 100 Piece Set (CitiBlocs)
- Citiblocs Little Builders Rattle Blocs (CitiBlocs)
- Count Your Chickens! board game (Peaceable Kingdom)
- Elemenosqueeze (B. Toys by Battat)
- Hoot Owl Hoot! board game (Peaceable Kingdom)
- Little Shopper Playset (Earlyyears)
- Sassy Sensor Ball Set (Sassy)
- Soft Chime Garden (Lamaze)