



310 Prospect Street
New Haven, CT 06511
www.gesellinstitute.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jennifer Pelton
E-mail: Jennifer@gesellinstitute.org
Voice: 203-777-3481 ext.718

Gesell Institute Supports Complaint Against *Your Baby Can Read!*

New Haven, CT (April 20, 2011) – Gesell Institute of Human Development fully supports the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood’s (CCFC) report filed last week against Your Baby Can, LLC and its founder Dr. Robert Titzer. The CCFC, which advocates against the commercial exploitation of children, believes that Titzer’s marketing strategies and practices are in violation of Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act.

Your Baby Can, LLC has become monetarily successful through its most popular series, “Your Baby Can Read!” which is heavily advertised on television and the web. This product is approximately \$200, and Gesell Institute, along with the CCFC’s complaint, believes this company is conning parents out of every cent – economically and emotionally – by taking their money and offering the hope and false encouragement that their children will know how to read at a biologically undeveloped age.

“Your Baby Can Read!” DVDs’ preferable method of teaching is to expose infants ages 0-2 to watching television screens. Children at this young age may recognize written “words” on the TV screen, but their brains are not developed enough to actually learn how to read and interpret information; it is all memorization of designs or colors at best. There is no evidence that babies who are watching these DVDs are actually better readers later on throughout their childhood. More importantly, The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children should not be exposed to any such screen time at all before the age of two, and their studies have shown that a few hours of TV exposure a day before the age of 3 could be associated with subsequent attention problems.

Dr. Susan Linn, the CCFC’s Director, was cited for saying, “These so-called educational videos don’t work. And they’re no substitute for what babies need – love, caring adults and the opportunity to play and explore their surroundings.” Gesell Institute’s Executive Director, Dr. Marcy Guddemi, couldn’t agree more. “Just because there is a product advertised on TV, does not validate whether it is good, reliable or safe. Parents should not be so two-dimensional when it comes to educating their child, and especially letting someone else on a DVD do it. *Parents* should be reading to their baby, not the TV, to accomplish the very best possible literacy foundation for the child.”

In October 2010, Gesell Institute completed a three-year study on over 1300 preschoolers. Its results conflict with the current myth that “earlier is better.” In the USA, parents and schools tend to believe incorrectly that “learning” academic skills earlier leads to school success, and thus, strive to teach these skills earlier and earlier. Gesell’s data found that the developmental abilities or milestones that must emerge *before* an academic curriculum has meaning for the child are not emerging any sooner with this generation of children who have been exposed to all kinds of computer games, educational TV programs, and educational DVD’s. In fact, this new data supports the research Dr.

Arnold Gesell first published in the early part of the twentieth century. Sooner is not better, nor is it possible.

On the “Your Baby Can Read!” website Dr. Titzer states, “Starting to teach reading in school is too late.” Dr. Guddemi strongly disagrees, and even advocated last month for the passing of a CT Bill that would roll back the now January 1 Kindergarten entrance date to September in Connecticut. In some other countries around the world, children do not receive formal teaching on how to read until age 7. Some believe that’s when the brain is ready developmentally to understand the abstract thinking involved in true reading.

Gesell Institute supports the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood in their recent complaint against “Your Baby Can Read!” because Gesell’s vision is that all children will have the opportunity and right to learn and grown at their own pace, in their own way, and in their own time. “Your Baby Can Read!” is taking full advantage of this right, and everyone should realize that Titzer’s company is merely profiting from this exploitation of babies and parents, and parents should beware.

Gesell Institute of Human Development is an independent non-profit organization associated with how children grow and learn since 1950. The work of Arnold Gesell, PhD, MD, (1888-1961), founding Director of the Yale Child Study Center in 1911 and the Institute’s namesake, had a profound influence on the field of child development. Based on Gesell’s pioneering work documenting infant and child growth and development, during the first half of the twentieth century, Gesell programs and publications help parents and educators understand the ages and stages of childhood. Professional development and parent workshops cover a broad range of topics regarding child behavior, healthy growth and development, and positive learning outcomes. For additional information and resources, visit www.gesellinstitute.org. You can find Gesell Institute on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube.

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