The Brain Architecture Game
Guidelines for Playing the Game in Colorado Communities

Building strong brains takes all of us working together. And there are many factors that can promote strong brain development in young children, along with many factors that can derail it. This game is meant to be played with any and every audience since we all play a role in building strong brains! These guidelines include some tips and tricks to making the game successful as you facilitate it in your own Colorado community.

Getting Started…

Have you experienced or facilitated the Brain Game before? Do you have other members in your community who have experienced it or facilitated it in the past? It is recommended that you are familiar with the game before facilitating it yourself. Other tips:

- Recruit others who have played the game before to join your game. It's much easier for tables to get rolling when at least one person isn't completely new to the game. Make sure to check out the Brain Game Community List to see if you can connect with others who have played and/or facilitated the game in your area.
- Have you set the stage for the importance of early brain development and how this game can help groups better understand the science? Take a look at video clips and resources which may accompany your game and "set the stage" before you dive into playing. You can find these resources online in the ECCP Brain Architecture Game toolkit and Adversity, Toxic Stress, and Resilience toolkit at www.earlychildhoodcoloradopartnership.org
- Make a connection to children – consider encouraging participants to consider a child or children who may have experienced a potentially traumatic event and how they were able to cope or not cope? What/who supported that child through the tough time? This makes it more personal for participants.
- Also consider how the game may be a trigger for participants who may have experienced early adversities or toxic stress themselves. Allowing the time and space for participants to share emotions and feelings and sharing the trigger potential ahead of time may make participants feel more supported.

Playing the Game…

The Brain Architecture Game can be an incredible growing experience for groups and communities, but it can also be a complex game to play. We've developed some helpful tips to ensure the game can go as smoothly as possible, limiting any confusion for participants.

- Make sure to read the directions for playing the game BEFORE playing the game so you know the speaking cues and what to look out for
- This game takes at least 60 minutes to play, so make sure to provide ample time. Some time saving ideas:
  - Consider having the bases of your brains pre-built so groups can get going quicker
  - Have examples of brains set up beforehand (although this can take away the creativity factor)
  - Use 3 cards per year to keep the number of rounds lower
- Be clear about when to use pipe cleaners and when to use straws as this can be a little confusing for some groups
- After the initial roll of the dice, do a check in to see how groups are feeling, where there is confusion, etc.

- Do small check ins after each step (i.e. "are your pipe cleaners in place?")

Wrap Up and Follow Up…

- Make sure to leave time after the game is played for discussion, debriefing, and sharing. Consider the following:
  - What feelings or emotions might the game invoke for individuals or communities?
  - How does this connect to the needs of your own community? What action can be taken?
  - What are the next steps?
- Evaluation
  - We would love to hear your thoughts or feedback on how we can improve your experience using the Brain Architecture Game and supportive tools. Please include any suggestions for the toolkit found online: www.earlychildhoodcoloradopartnership.org/ Email earlychildhood@civiccanopy.org or fill out this form: https://goo.gl/forms/5T6wUYAwVRhKJ5Os2
  - Add yourself/your community to the Brain Game Community List so others in your community can find you. Transformative change happens when we work *together*. We are *all* brain builders!
  - Share photos by sending to earlychildhood@civiccanopy.org or add to our Facebook!