

What Babies Know About Physics and Foreign Languages

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The New York Times:

Parents and policy makers have become obsessed with getting young children to learn more, faster. But the picture of early learning that drives them is exactly the opposite of the one that emerges from developmental science.

In the last 30 years, the United States has completed its transformation to an information economy. Knowledge is as important in the 21st century as capital was in the 19th, or land in the 18th. In the same 30 years, scientists have discovered that even very young children learn more than we once thought possible. Put those together and our preoccupation with making children learn is no surprise.

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Experimental studies show that even the youngest children are naturally driven to imitate. Back in 1988, Andrew Meltzoff of the University of Washington did a study in which 14-month-olds saw an experimenter do something weird — she tapped her forehead on top of a box to make it light up. A week later, the babies came back to the lab and saw the box. Most of them immediately tried to tap their own foreheads on the box to make the light go on.

Read the whole story: [*The New York Times*](#)