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'Big Bang's' brainy Bialik is new face of Fisher-Price's STEM-focused toys 'Think & Learn' line fosters critical skills

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She's a nerd and she plays one on TV.

That's what makes Mayim Bialik the perfect spokeswoman for Fisher-Price's new line of brainy toys targeting kids and their STEM-crazed parents.

On the hit show "The Big Bang Theory," Bialik plays a neurobiologist. In real life, she has a Ph.D. in neuroscience. And she's about to vouch for a line of toys that parents hope will help turn their kids into one or the other – or something close.

"Like Fisher-Price, Mayim recognizes that the skills today's preschoolers need to be successful in life are changing," said Mike Sullivan, senior director of global brand marketing at the company. "She's the embodiment of both arts and science – creativity and critical thinking – and we hope parents are interested in learning how she's nurturing her own children's interests."

The Think & Learn line, geared toward kids ages 3 through 6, was created in East Aurora by a local team of designers, marketers and engineers and tested by local children at Fisher-Price's Play Lab. Designed to foster communication, collaboration, creativity and critical thinking, they hit all of millennial parents' favorite buzzwords.

The standout Code-a-pillar helps kids practice coding and sequencing by letting them arrange the caterpillar's segments in different combinations, which tell it how to move. It retails for \$49.99. The Smart Scan Color Chameleon (\$24.99) changes color when it scans plastic paint splats or household objects. The Smart Scan Word Dash has a magnifying glass-like scanner and small discs which kids can scan to make up poems, go on scavenger hunts and play memory games (\$29.99).

Bialik is a parenting author and blogger, who has been criticized for her natural and attachment parenting choices, including breast-feeding her 3-year-old son on a New York City subway and opting not to give her children medicine or antibiotics. But controversy fades in the face of her former child stardom on the show "Blossom," and Bialik instantly appeals to Fisher-Price's target demographic – millennials.

The importance of science, technology, engineering and math skills has been made clear by everyone from the U.S. Department of Education to Sesame Street. School systems have been pushing to get children involved in STEM activities younger and younger, and parents, afraid their children will be left behind, have been heeding the call – signing their kids up for camps and workshops, and paying closer attention to the STEM subjects in school and at play. It's a prime opportunity for a company like Fisher-Price, which promotes itself as a company that helps children learn through play.

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