Achievement Gap
4th Grade

100
80
60
%
40
20
0

Math

Reading

Achievement Gap

news

FPG Mourns the Loss of Dr. Pascal "Pat" Trohanis, a Champion of Young Children with Disabilities

Dr. Pascal "Pat" Trohanis, senior scientist at FPG Child Development Institute at UNC and long-term director of the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC), died June 23, 2007, after a long battle with cancer. He was 64.

"FPG has lost one of its important early leaders with the passing of Pat Trohanis. To many people in special education he was the face of FPG as he carried our message across the country and around the world," said James Gallagher, a fellow and former director of FPG. "We will remember Pat with a smile and with great gratitude for what he has accomplished for all of us and for the children with special needs to whom he gave so many years."

Trohanis joined FPG in 1972 and became director of NECTAC's predecessor in 1987. As director, Trohanis worked to ensure that young children with disabilities could participate fully in community life with dignity and respect. Due to his leadership, NECTAC's impact is now felt by approximately one million children throughout the United States and its territories. NECTAC serves as the U.S. Office of Special Education Program's national resource for states on implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, particularly the early childhood provisions.

In 1989, Trohanis was honored for his contributions to preschool special education with the Mary McEvoy Service to the Field Award from the Division of Early Childhood (DEC). DEC is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving educational outcomes for individuals with exceptionalities, students with disabilities, and the gifted.
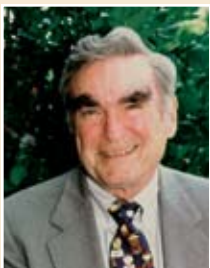
Former FPG Director Honored as International Leader in Gifted Education

James Gallagher, Ph.D., was honored as a leader in gifted education by the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children. Gallagher is a former director and current senior scientist emeritus of FPG Child Development Institute and the Kenan Professor Emeritus at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Campbell Honored as Distinguished Alumni

Frances Campbell, Ph.D., a senior scientist at FPG, received the Alumni Distinguished Service Award from The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Campbell is internationally recognized for her work on the Abecedarian Project, one of the longest running longitudinal studies in the world. The project was among the first studies to demonstrate the importance of high quality early care and education.

FPG Teacher Receives Child Care Provider Award

Michael Thomas, a preschool teacher at FPG's Family and Child Care Program, received the Mary Y. Bridgers Child Care Provider Award from the Child Care Services Association. The award is presented to a Triangle (North Carolina) child care teacher for outstanding service to children.

FPG. Advancing knowledge. Enhancing lives.

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early developments

Fall 2007 | Vol. 11, No. 2

COVER ART
The bar graph on the cover reflects findings of the 2007 National
Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) known as the
Nation's Report Card. According to the NAEP, 46 percent of
African American fourth graders and 77 percent of White fourth
graders scored at or above basic level in reading. In math, 64
percent of African American fourth graders and 91 percent of
White fourth graders scored at or above the basic level. Data can
be found at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/.

20 YEARS AGO

School Kids Are Stifled By Achievement Gaps
St. Petersburg Times (Florida), November 22, 1987

Officials Say Metco Students Suffer an Achievement Gap
The Boston Globe, June 27, 1989

10 YEARS AGO

Education Study Shows Urban-Suburban Achievement Gap
Philadelphia Inquirer, January 8, 1998

UNFORTUNATELY, the headlines have not changed much. Despite decades of attention, the achievement gap between Black and Latino children and their White peers persists. Perhaps what has changed is that the term "achievement gap" is now a household phrase and closing the gap has become a national priority.

A 2006 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll on attitudes toward education reported that 88 percent of the public believe it is very or somewhat important to close the achievement gap between white students and Black and Latino students. And politicians of all stripes recognize its significance.

"If we don't start to close this achievement gap, we are not going to live in a very prosperous country, or in a very civically-engaged country," said U. S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings in a December 2006 radio interview.

"This achievement gap is deeply troubling to me. If we don't invest in our children, our society and our economy will decline. This is not just something nice to do, this is something that we have to do," said Democratic presidential candidate Senator Hillary Clinton in a February 2007 speech in Miami.

Agreeing that the problem exists and is important is the easy part; finding effective solutions is more challenging. We are purposeful in noting that it will take solutions (plural) to close the gap. Research has identified a host of fac-

tors that likely contribute to the disparity in achievement, negating the possibility that a one-size-fits-all answer exists. Therefore, the initiatives highlighted in this issue of *Early Developments* address a variety of approaches. At the root of all of them is research. FPG is diligently working to expand the research-base of effective solutions, while using what is already known to design innovative and fresh ways to tackle the gap head on.

Promoting Academic Success (PAS) of Boys of Color—a new FPG initiative described in the first article—is building on the knowledge that early experiences and home environment are critical components to a child's later achievement.

PAS recognizes that the gap is caused by a variety of factors and therefore overcoming the gap requires a multi-pronged approach.

"This work will be guided by the metaphor of a four-legged stool in which each leg represents what children need to thrive: effective parents, competent teachers, supportive communities and a spiritual foundation. If one of the legs is wobbly the others can compensate until the weak leg is strengthened," said Dr. Oscar Barbarin, FPG fellow and the L. Richardson and Emily Preyer Bicentennial Distinguished Professor for Strengthening Families in the School of Social Work at UNC. Dr. Barbarin is the project's principal investigator.

A Wide Achievement Gap;
Test Scores Differ Greatly Between Racial Groups

The San Diego Union-Tribune, August 16, 2007

Rochester's Achievement Gap Grows

Post-Bulletin (Rochester, Minnesota), June 26, 2007

Schools Make Gains on Tests;
Achievement Gap Persists with Minorities

The Washington Post, June 21, 2007

Report Shows
Indiana's Achievement Gap Still a Problem

The Associated Press State & Local Wire, June 5, 2007

The second article in this issue also stems from years of research. More than 25 years ago, a 1981 research article in *Educational Leadership,* revealed that some teachers treat high- and low-achieving students differently and that teachers' expectations appeared to be associated with student achievement. It is just one of numerous studies that suggest that expectations play an important role in achievement.

Expectations are at the heart of FPG's Project U-STARS ~ PLUS (Using Science, Talents, and Abilities to Recognize Students ~ Promoting Learning for Under-Represented Students). This initiative is turning the at-risk stereotype on its head. Rather than assuming children are at-risk, it assumes "at-potential." This project works with kindergarten through third grade teachers to recognize outstanding potential in their students.

With the Teens in School Project, FPG researchers are gathering important data on additional factors that may play a role in the achievement gap, particularly in areas of language development. This project has followed 74 African American children from the time they entered child care (between one and eleven months) through the sixth grade.

This issue also highlights FPG research that found that English-only pre-kindergarten classrooms may not help native Spanish-speaking children become better prepared for school.

Finally, we included a commentary that describes the informal observations of several trained observers for a study of pre-K program quality and outcomes. The observational data discussed in this article were not collected as a formal part of the study, nor do they meet the standards of scientific research. Instead, they note the concerns of what the observers saw as a trend of unnecessary or overly punitive discipline directed toward young minority children.

As the headlines at the beginning suggest, the achievement gap is hardly a new phenomenon. However, there seems finally to be an acknowledgment by both policymakers and the public-at-large that such a gap is unacceptable. It will take strong political will and public support to avoid short-term quick-fixes and invest in the multiple solutions that will be needed to truly close the gap.

—*Tracy Zimmerman*

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Helping Boys of Color Succeed

ALTHOUGH A DEBATE IS RAGING over whether boys are truly in crisis, as has been asserted by scholars for the past few decades, (see "The Myth About Boys in the August 6, 2007, *Time* Magazine), everyone involved concedes that the situation for boys of color is dire. The problem is long-standing and stubbornly resistant to piecemeal solutions. Researchers at FPG are thinking about and tackling this problem in a novel way which they hope will yield more promising results.

FPG's Promoting Academic Success (PAS) of Boys of Color acknowledges that the achievement gap is caused by a variety of factors, and therefore overcoming the gap requires a multi-pronged approach.

"This work will be guided by the metaphor of a four-legged stool in which each leg represents what children need to thrive: effective parents, competent teachers, supportive communities and a spiritual foundation. If one of the legs is wobbly the others can compensate until the weak leg is strengthened," said Dr. Oscar Barbarin, FPG fellow and the L. Richardson and Emily Preyer Bicentennial Distinguished Professor for Strengthening Families in the UNC School of Social Work. Dr. Barbarin is the project's principal investigator.

Funded by a $6.2 million, five-year grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, PAS will work with four school districts to mobilize and support partnerships among the many entities that intersect with the lives of boys of color between three and eight years old. The districts include Chicago and Peoria in Illinois; Lansing, Michigan; and Polk County, Florida.

PAS' Definition of the Problem

One only has to look at men of color to see that as boys too many were thrust into a developmental trajectory that led to adverse academic and social outcomes.

A number of factors—individual, interpersonal, familial, social, and environmental—come together to create what Dr. Barbarin calls a "wall of despair."

Research supports that boys of color are in crisis. The National Household Education Surveys Program by the U. S. Department of Education looked at the early skills of young boys of color and found them lagging in emergent literacy skills. In a separate study, the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, it was found that in kindergarten boys of color have much lower math and reading skills than all other groups.

These studies and others like them demonstrate that the achievement gap begins early. By the time children are in preschool differences can already be seen. Many come to school with fewer skills, delayed letter recognition, less general knowledge, and perceived behavioral issues that place them at risk for serious problems throughout their schooling.

By third grade, boys of color are at the 20TH percentile in reading, meaning that 80 percent of children across the country score better. By high school, boys of color are much less likely to participate in college prep classes and are often tracked into vocational and less demanding classes. They have lower high school graduation rates and therefore, college attendance rates than their White peers. In fact, even in historically Black colleges, girls far outnumber boys.

While these problems are more pronounced in poor children, they remain prevalent for middle and upper income boys of color as well. The Early Childhood Longitudinal Study demonstrated differences in achievement for boys of color and Whites in every economic category. Even at the highest income levels, Latino and Black children under-perform White children.

The PAS initiative is focusing specifically on boys because they tend to fare worse. As a whole, girls of color do better in school and score higher on knowledge and skills than boys when they start school. Boys tend to have more behavioral difficulties than girls, which compounds the problem of skill deficits.

"Early deficits that boys bring to school are self-perpetuating and lead to a lifetime of consequences. As adults, males of color become devalued," Dr. Barbarin said. "It is a dire situation that requires action."

PAS' Explanation of the Causes

The PAS Initiative begins with the premise that the achievement gap is fueled by a combination of factors including family life, the school environment, and the community setting. Each is described below.

"It's important to understand that in describing these challenges we are not seeking to assign blame," Dr. Barbarin emphasized. "We are taking an honest look so that we can understand how each of these elements contributes to the problem and then go on to consider how they can contribute to the solution."

Family Life

Parents and families provide experiences and create environments that influence their children's development and ability to succeed. In previous research, Dr. Barbarin looked at how aspects of family life related to achievement. He found that African American and Latino children had higher achievement when their families provided access to books; were involved in the school; read to them; regulated television; discussed religion; emphasized basic skills such as learning the alphabet, colors, and numbers; and maintained an emotionally close relationship.

The study also found that children of color tended to do better in kindergarten math and reading when there was a father living in the household, the family was of higher income, the parents were physically and emotionally healthy, and their communities were safe.

Many of the problems related to the achievement gap flow from the low use of practices that tend to optimize development. For example, African American children at every income level watch more television than any other ethnic group.

"Television may be substituting for other kinds of enrichment activities because of a lack of resources in the community," Dr. Barbarin said.

Television also may play a role in how boys define manly behaviors. Close to 60 percent of African American boys grow up in households without fathers and male figures.

"Mothers are doing a heroic job in caring for their children and can certainly produce healthy boys. But for some, growing up with only females distorts their understanding of how men are supposed to be. They often pick up ideas from television," said Dr. Barbarin. "And boys growing up in female headed households often take on the role of protector. They take on more responsibility and then begin to act more independently. As a result, parents tend to give boys more freedoms before they are ready for it."

On the positive side, boys of color typically have access to spiritual life, a strong ethnic identity, and access to extended family. Spirituality has greater value beyond prayer. Children benefit from being taught there is more to life than material things. They need to develop a concern for others and recognition that they have a social compact to fulfill.

Racism also plays a powerful role in family dynamics. Children are socialized by their families on how to deal with issues of racism. A child's view of self and how he or she relates to the world comes from family. Families may give the view that they are a minority that it is disparaged and subject to discrimination. They may anticipate the effects of discrimination and convey that children will be unable to succeed. On the flip side, they may anticipate these effects and convey that the child must work harder to overcome them.

Boys of color, like all children, thrive in families where they are physically safe, and experience emotional warmth and acceptance, and the unconditional love that only families can provide. They also need competent, interested and involved adults who provide discipline, a rich literacy environment, stimulating activities when not in school, and a home climate that values learning and teaching.

Parents strive to provide these things, but often need help. Many would appreciate parent training efforts that focus on how to socialize boys for academic skills and self regulation. These trainings would provide opportunities for reflection and respect of parents' knowledge. Families would define the outcomes they seek for their children.

School Environment

As children get older, schools become important as institutions for socialization and enhancing skills. Unfortunately, the quality of schools is often linked to family income. Poor and minority children typically attend schools that have:

- High concentrations of poor and minority students,
- Peers who have below average skills,
- Teachers who are less experienced,
- Teachers who have low performance expectations,

> **Boys of color, like all children, thrive in families where they are physically safe, and experience emotional warmth and acceptance, and the unconditional love that only families can provide.**

The PAS Initiative School Districts

Chicago

The PAS Initiative will focus on boys in the Englewood and Woodlawn communities of the Chicago Public Schools district. These communities have long been plagued with gangs, drugs, families with few resources, poor housing and unemployment. The crime rate has steadily progressed over the years (more in the Englewood community), even as community revitalization efforts are occurring.

Children are in need of ongoing socio-emotional support and mentoring because of the number of difficulties they face where they live. Through the problems they experience on a daily basis, African American boys living in Englewood and Woodlawn have been set on a trajectory of failure through adulthood that has had a cyclical effect on the male population in these communities.

Lansing

The conditions for boys of color in Lansing schools are troubling. The data reveal that for boys of color, achievement declines the more time they spend in the school system. While there is a gap in vocabulary and other readiness indicators as children enter schools, there is a more pronounced gap as students leave fourth grade. Lansing's test data mirrors that of national measures that show a sharp drop off of student academic performance at around the fourth grade level.

However, more than academic tests foretell student school success. Boys of color in Lansing are more frequently suspended and referred out of the classroom for acting out behaviors, referred to special education in the categories of emotionally or learning impaired, and retained at grade level.

Unfortunately, this same population of children is more likely to be later suspended and expelled in middle and high school, more likely to be retained at grade level, fail two or more courses, fail to graduate within four years of entering high school, drop out, take less rigorous courses and less likely to attend college, as compared to their classmates.

Peoria

By the end of third grade, 48 percent of boys of color in Peoria fail to meet state standards in reading. Students attending schools located in areas of the city with the highest crime rates are more likely to witness violence, be victims of violence, or become perpetrators of violence. For example, when compared to Peoria's demographics, black juveniles represent a disproportionate amount of criminal offenses. Peoria is 69 percent White and 25 percent African American. Yet in 2005, 79 percent of the admissions to the Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center were black youths. Juvenile Court activity in 2006 showed that of 359 cases, 253 were concerning males. Of those, 242 cases concerned black juveniles.

In addition, Peoria outpaces statewide averages in all four delinquency risk factors, according to Peoria's 2004-05 School Report Card, with over double the dropout rate, almost triple the mobility rate, and quadruple the truancy rate.

Polk County

With countywide school systems, Florida dominates the nation's 50 largest districts. Polk is the eighth largest of Florida's 67 districts, and 38th among districts nationwide. This year, Hispanics for the first time surpassed the number of African-Americans entering Polk County kindergartens. There are more than 5,000 students whose primary language is not English.

Boys of color make up 23 percent of the Polk County student population, but represent 51 percent of expulsion referrals in 2007, 33 percent of referrals to special education, and 40 percent of suspensions from school.

- More dangerous and less adequate facilities, and
- Poor facilities, fewer books, science labs, music, art and drama.

The effects of quality are compounded by the nature of classrooms, particularly early childhood classrooms, which tend to be a poor fit for boys of color. (See article on page 21 adapted from *Young Children.*) Boys in general typically have more limited language skills. They learn and communicate more through movement, and they tend to have less control of their behavior at the age when kindergarten begins.

"Most boys attend classrooms that are feminized, intellectualized, and rely on a mastery of verbal skills. This does not work for all boys," Dr. Barbarin explained. "It's a mismatch."

This mismatch produces significant effects. Boys are more likely to be viewed as poorly adjusted, subjected to punishment, assigned to special education, and retained. And boys' masculine posturing is sometimes misinterpreted as hyper-aggression and hostility.

Gaps in teacher preparation add to the problem. Inexperienced teachers easily misinterpret boys' behaviors and use emotional distance and overly punitive responses, which rather than resolving problems fuels them.

There are steps schools can take to create more responsive environments. For example, research has identified several conditions that contribute to successful first grade reading. Children perform better when:

- They are in classrooms with peers with high reading skills,
- They have multiple opportunities for reading and writing,
- They have teachers who have experience in first grade, and
- They have teachers who have strong expectations and believe that the children can learn.

Research also shows that access to high quality early childhood education makes a significant difference. Children need early childhood teachers who are sensitive and responsive to their academic and social needs. At the same time, they benefit from programs which actively engage them in learning specific skills.

Community Setting

Communities also feed into the achievement gap. Boys of color who live in "risky communities" are more likely to experience poor outcomes. Dr. Barbarin defines a "risky community" as:

- Having limited opportunities for enrichment activities,
- Being unsafe and isolated,
- Being overcrowded and transient,

- Having poor quality housing,
- Having low efficacy, meaning the community feels powerless to address problems, and
- Having high concentrations of poverty.

Poor communities play a less obvious role as well. Frequently, there is little social capital. Boys are unable to form productive contacts and networks that will help them as they progress through school and enter the job market.

Neighborhoods are often both victim and perpetrator—poor conditions produce struggling young people who have fewer opportunities which reinforces the poor conditions. But a lack of resources does not have to mean of lack of activity. Organized after-school, weekend, and summer programs produce significant benefits for children. The same is true for tutoring and homework assistance and organized sports.

Children can learn that there is value in serving others by participating in community clean-up days, visiting seniors' homes, and other improvement projects.

The PAS Initiative

This lengthy description of the problem and PAS' interpretation of the causes is necessary to create an initiative that will have broad and lasting impact. On one level, PAS is a consciousness raising campaign that will use multiple media and methods to draw attention to the issues impacting the development of boys of color.

"People need to have a sense of urgency around this issue to be inspired to take bold steps," Dr. Barbarin said.

PAS will work with four communities to test ideas. "We do not claim that we have the magic bullet—that we know the answer to this," Dr. Barbarin explained. "But we will apply rigorous scientific evaluation methods to determine what does work."

The initiative will help the four school districts design and implement interventions within families, classrooms and communities that fit with local circumstances and resources. The project's researchers will identify and report the most promising multisystemic interventions.

The communities selected demonstrated a commitment to addressing issues of boys of color and a history of collaboration among agencies and structures involved in children's lives. During the four-year grant, PAS will provide help in the initial planning stages, assistance with implementation, evaluation of the program, and financial resources.

While communities will tailor their programs to meet local needs, they all must strive toward the same ends. Expected changes include:

- Parents will engage in practices that are more effective in enhancing child language, literacy, math, and social competence.
- Parents will be more effective in communicating values and a culture of civic engagement commitment.
- Teachers will be better prepared to handle the social dynamics and academic challenges of teaching boys of color.
- The organization and structure of classrooms and the administration of school discipline policies will be a better fit for boys of color.

- Collaborations among schools, families, and community-based organizations will be developed to address the problems of boys.
- The capacity of communities to advocate for child-friendly policies will increase.

These changes of course are meant to serve one purpose—improving the outcomes for boys of color, including:

- Boys of color will demonstrate expected levels of competence in literacy, numeracy, language, and social skills.
- Boys will have a strengthened social identity by participating in relationships with nurturing men who provide moral and spiritual guidance and a sense of purpose and meaning to their lives.

In the end, success will have a simple definition—by third grade the PAS initative will have increased the proportion of boys of color who meet state standards for academic achievement. |ed|

> Research also shows that access to high quality early childhood education makes a significant difference. Children need early childhood teachers who are sensitive and responsive to their academic and social needs.

To Learn More

Visit http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~pas/

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Rejecting the Stereotype:
Project
U-STARS~PLUS
Assumes
"At-Potential"

W HAT IF, ON YOUR FIRST DAY AT A NEW JOB, you found out that you were an "at-risk" employee? You knew from the start that you were labeled as being more likely to fail than your colleagues. So the Human Resources Department provided you with extra supports in basic skills with the hopes that you might get by. But they never put you on the promotion track; they were just hoping you wouldn't fail.

Sounds like a pretty awful environment, right? Yet everyday the United States does this to millions of young children—especially those with a minority background, living in poor neighborhoods and/or learning English as a second language. Before they even set foot in a school these children are labeled at-risk and then continually viewed through that very narrow prism.

FPG's Project U-STARS ~ PLUS (Using Science, Talents, and Abilities to Recognize Students ~ Promoting Learning for Under-Represented Students) is turning the at-risk stereotype on its head. Rather than assuming children are at-risk, it assumes "at-potential." Project U-STARS ~ PLUS works with kindergarten through third grade teachers to recognize outstanding potential in their students. Teachers systematically observe students and use effective teaching strategies including differentiation and hands-on, inquiry-based science.

Why science? Young children by their nature tend to be interested in how things work, so science provides an excellent means to engage all students. Because it is inquiry-based and focuses on exploration and problem-solving and is not based solely on verbal skills, science gives students the opportunity to demonstrate thinking skills, creativity, and persistence. Furthermore, by using science as a platform teachers can easily integrate reading, math, writing, and art.

Teachers develop high-end learning experiences for their students as well as learn new tools for observing students through ongoing professional development provided by U-STARS ~ PLUS project staff and school site teams. Teachers learn what to look for—especially how outstanding abilities manifest in children from under-served populations; how to structure classrooms with active and appropriately challenging learning so that students can more easily demonstrate their potential; and how to create a classroom climate conducive to student's exploration of new ideas.

Professional development for teachers, however, is only half the equation. Project U-STARS ~ PLUS actively involves families. Schools hold orientation sessions, conferences, and workshops with families and they do so in a manner in which families are able to attend. For example at one school parents had very limited access to transportation, so the district sent school buses to pick up parents and their children.

Families also receive family packets of science learning activities designed to support what is being studied in the classroom. These packets include detailed steps that actively and easily involve parents in their child's learning experience in a meaningful way.

"The creation of an environment where high-end learning opportunities are the norm lends itself to seeing children though an 'at-potential' positive perspective. Seeing children though a positive lens fosters a climate of expected academic success," said Mary Ruth Coleman, U-STARS ~ PLUS director. "This climate builds further opportunities for challenge and accomplishments. When parents and family members are brought into this mix, the child gains the support needed to sustain his or her progress."

U-STARS ~ PLUS currently works with 35 school districts and 100 schools in North Carolina, Louisiana, Colorado, and Ohio. The project has reached 985 kindergarten through third grade teachers and specialists who have, in turn, impacted an estimated 21,670 young children.

What Is High-End Learning?

High-end learning means that teachers intentionally provide learning experiences that reach the highest levels of the child's needs rather than watering down the curricula and activities to the lowest level. High-end learning involves questions that require students to think, inquiry activities where children must explore and create, open-ended assignments that address ethical issues, and other activities that engage children in learning that goes well beyond rote memory.

When a teacher provides challenging and enriched learning experiences and provides the support needed for children to be successful, he or she has given students an opportunity to grow.

Teachers have embraced the program. When asked, "What has been the best thing that U-STARS ~ PLUS has made happen at your school?" their answers included:

"Looking at kids I might have missed."

"The kids now love to explore—they're not afraid to look at anything."

"The kids now realize that everyone has strengths."

"U-STARS ~ PLUS gave us the impetus to look for *other* ways to look for potential."

But what is most impressive is the number of children who might have been discounted as having high potential without this project. In a survey, 59 teachers from schools involved with the research aspect of the grant responded that without this program they would have missed identifying 79 students who would benefit from advanced educational opportunities and gifted education services. And that is just from 59 of almost 1,000 teachers with whom the project has worked.

The Harrison Observation Student Form

One of the means teachers are using to observe children differently is the *Harrison Observation Student Form*. The form is designed to capture both "teacher pleasing" and "non-teacher pleasing" behaviors because gifted children are not always "teacher pleasers." The first step is for the teacher to observe the class as a whole for three to six weeks. Each time a behavior is observed, the teacher writes the child's name next to the behavior. Children whose names appear next to several behaviors or have several notes for any one behavior are then observed individually.

The form focuses on nine areas: learns easily, shows advanced skills, displays curiosity and creativity, has strong interests, shows advanced reasoning and problem solving, displays spatial abilities, is motivated, shows social perceptiveness, and displays leadership. Each category identifies several behaviors that show how children with this strength might behave in the classroom.

For example, behaviors listed under "Has Strong Interests" include:

- Is able to lose self in something of interest.
- Demonstrates unusual or advanced interests.
- Keeps extensive collections.
- Is considered an "expert" in a particular topic (may seem domineering).
- Checks out books on particular topics.
- Chooses to become involved when area of interest is addressed.
- Has interest in areas outside typical school curriculum.
- Leads discussions back to one topic of interest.
- Resists transitioning to a new topic of study.

Information gained from observations is used to inform the process of matching students with appropriate service options when needed. Other factors in looking for potential include student performance, achievement, aptitude, interest, and motivation to learn. These factors are measured both formally and informally.

Means Not an End

"Recognition of potential does not automatically mean 'identification as gifted;' what it does demand is that an appropriate educational response be made," Coleman said.

Ultimately, identification is a means not an end.

Project U-STARS~PLUS Is Characterized by Five Components

1. High-end challenging learning opportunities;
2. Systematic observation of students to identify potential to inform instruction;
3. Hands-on, inquiry-based science lessons that focus on exploration, problem solving, higher-level thinking, creativity, and persistence and that can be meaningfully integrated across the curriculum;
4. Parent and family engagement in school and academic areas of interest; and
5. Systemic change through capacity building.

The goal is to use identification data to move towards providing multiple and varied instructional plans, not simply to identify students for pull-out programs. With differentiation, much can be done in the regular classroom. Teachers can use curriculum compacting, tiered assignments, independent and small group work, learning centers, and questioning techniques for higher order thinking to best serve children's diverse learning needs.

U-STARS ~ PLUS is making a difference. Data from research schools show that teachers believe students have increased their abilities to "think outside of the box, critically" and have a greater interest in learning.

And a major independent evaluation report of North Carolina schools entitled *Increasing Opportunity to Learn via Access to Rigorous Courses and Programs: One Strategy for Closing the Achievement Gap for At-Risk and Ethnic*

Minority Students cited U-STARS ~ PLUS as one of the most promising practices for closing the achievement gap for young children living in poverty.

"When children are engaged in active meaningful learning the concern is not that they will be left behind—it is how can the teacher keep up with the curiosity of a child exploring the world," Coleman said. **|ed|**

To learn more

Visit www.fpg.unc.edu/~ustars/

Increasing Opportunity to Learn via Access to Rigorous Courses and Programs: One Strategy for Closing the Achievement Gap for At-Risk and Ethnic Minority Students can be found at www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/ec/development/gifted/increasingopportunities.pdf

Integrating Science with Reading, Writing, Math and Art

Butterflies often serve as the basis of a science unit to learn about the characteristics of organisms, their life cycles, and their environments. A U-STARS~PLUS teacher resource lesson designed to connect science and literature suggests the teacher start by reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle. Students then have the opportunity to demonstrate several skills as described below:

- **Knowledge:** List things that the caterpillar ate while he was hungry.
- **Comprehension:** Describe each stage of the butterfly's life.
- **Application:** Describe what would happen to you if you ate only junk food.
- **Analysis:** Compare and contrast the stages of a butterfly.
- **Synthesis:** Explain the relationship between the caterpillar and the butterfly.
- **Evaluation:** Describe which life stage of the butterfly you like the most. Explain why.

Meanwhile, students engage in scientific inquiry by, perhaps, setting up a butterfly garden and recording how long each stage lasts. Or they might research butterflies native to the area and create a museum with visuals of the different butterflies.

A Closer Look

FROM BABBLING BABIES TO HIP-TALKING ADOLESCENTS, a group of 74 African American youths are providing new insights into factors that may play a role in the achievement gap. FPG researchers Joanne Roberts, Susan Zeisel, Peg Burchinal, Stephanie Rowley, and Steve Hooper have followed these youth from their first year of life through the sixth grade.

The research, now known as the Teens in School Project, began in 1991 and has included a variety of mechanisms to assess various aspects of children's lives. Teacher questionnaires, standardized tests, and annual interviews with primary caregivers, are among the many methodologies that researchers have incorporated into this ongoing work.

The first wave of research focused on home literacy practices. As the children aged and entered elementary and middle school, the project examined how being from families with multiple social risk factors affected the children's academic achievement. The findings are summarized below.

Preschool and Language Skills

From the time the children were 18 months until five years of age, their home literacy practices were followed to gain understanding about their language development and emergent literary skills. Researchers looked at four practices—how often mothers read

to their children, the mothers' book reading strategies, the child's enjoyment of reading, and maternal sensitivity—as well as the overall home environment.

Information about reading practices was obtained through annual interviews with the children's mothers. Mothers also were observed reading to their child. Children's language and vocabulary were assessed annually between three years of age and kindergarten. The *Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment Inventory* (HOME) provided a measure of the quality and quantity of stimulation and support available in the home. Homes received high scores when they had parents who were responsive, sensitive, and accepting of a child's behavior, and provided structure, organization, and a positive general emotional climate, along with stimulating toys and interactions.

The study found that the home environment was the most consistent predictor of children's language and literacy skills. It contributed over and above any of the specific literary practices measured. It's not to say that the literary practices were not important; they just did not have as big or as consistent an effect as the overall environment.

Understanding how best to influence language development is an important factor in reducing the achievement gap. Research shows that language skills play a significant role in children's success or failure when they enter school. When FPG researchers followed these children as they entered school, they found that language skills helped overcome the effects of social risk on academic achievement. These findings are discussed in the next section.

Early Elementary School Years

Previous research has found that children who experience high levels of adversity are likely to have substantially lower academic achievement from the time they begin kindergarten and continuing through their academic careers.

By following these children through the early elementary school years, FPG researchers hoped to identify child, family and school characteristics that could protect children from the negative academic effects of adversity. Protective factors are those things that are related to better outcomes for high-risk, but not for low-risk children.

In this study, researchers defined social risks as poverty, single parenthood, large households, low parental education, unemployment, low-income and maternal depression.

Just as the home environment played a significant role in children's language development during their preschool years, a specific aspect of the home—parenting—helped to mediate the effects of adversity on reading, mathematics, social skills, and behavior problems as the children entered school. And language development itself protected children.

Children who entered school with better language skills demonstrated higher reading and math skills at all ages.

This study concludes that exposure to multiple risk factors during early childhood relates to lower academic achievement and more problem behavior in school. Responsive and stimulating care by parents and child care providers can protect children from the apparent effects of exposure to risk. Further, children who enter school with better language skills seemed to be protected from the negative effects of social risk. These findings support the importance of supportive family environments and of current policies that promote high quality child care programs that enhance cognitive and language skills of children exposed to risk.

Transitioning to Middle School

The transition to middle school is a period of vulnerability for many children, but can present even greater challenges for African American children. It is a time when an existing achievement gap often widens. FPG researchers are now examining how social risk and the transition to middle school impacts achievement. Like the study of the children's early elementary years, researchers are identifying factors that might protect children from the negative effects of adversity. Findings will be published in a forthcoming issue of *Child Development.*

Conclusion

Not many studies have followed a group of African American children from infancy through the transition to high school. However, as a result of this study, researchers are gaining a better understanding of long-term effects of social risk, which can serve to shape effective policies for overcoming the achievement gap.

Researchers will continue to follow these children as they age through the high school years. Current work is examining the role that African American English plays in literacy achievement as well as the effects of racial identity, peer relations, linguistic skills, and school attitudes.

The project is funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, the Spencer Foundation, and the National Science Foundation. **|ed|**

To Learn More

Burchinal, M., Roberts, J. E., Zeisel, S. A., Hennon, E. A., & Hooper, S. (2006). Social risk and protective child, parenting, and child care factors in early elementary school years. *Parenting, 6*(1), 79-113.

Does English-Only Fuel the Achievement Gap?

O N March 30, 2007, Idaho became the 29th state in the nation to adopt English as its official language. It's the latest success of the "English-only" movement which began in the 1980s. Supporters of the movement assert that bilingualism is harmful to children, hurting their self-esteem and preventing them from becoming proficient in English thereby impeding their academic success and fueling the achievement gap.

- The relationship between language interactions children experienced in the classroom and children's social and behavioral competence as rated by teachers and independent observers;
- The relationship between language interactions and the teacher-child relationship; and
- Whether language interactions were related to changes in Spanish-speaking children's English and Spanish skills over the pre-kindergarten year.

The researchers found that English-only pre-kindergarten classrooms may not help native Spanish-speaking children become better prepared for school. The study showed that Spanish-speaking children with teachers who spoke some Spanish in the classroom were rated by their teachers as having better social skills and closer relationships with their teachers than children with teachers who did not speak Spanish in the classroom. Children with teachers who spoke some Spanish experienced less bullying by their classmates, and their teachers had a more positive view of them. The amount of Spanish spoken in the classroom was not related to a child's English proficiency. The study did not assess teachers' language proficiency in English and Spanish.

"Programs that have the potential to mitigate the achievement gap among children from different racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups may be doing just the opposite. This study suggests that early educational experiences that rely primarily on English may not be preparing Spanish-speaking children for school as well as they should," said an author of the study, Gisele Crawford, a research specialist at FPG.

The movement comes at a time when according to the U.S. Census the Hispanic population has grown by almost 60 percent in the past decade alone. Such growth affects almost every current policy issue, including how to best help young Spanish-speakers achieve school readiness—particularly as Hispanic students are significantly more likely than White students to enter kindergarten unprepared to succeed in school, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

To learn more about language and young Spanish-speaking children, FPG researchers examined 345 Spanish-speaking pre-kindergartners in 161 pre-k programs to determine:

- The quantity and quality of language interactions between Spanish-speaking children and their teachers;

About the Participants

Study participants came from the National Center for Early Development & Learning's (NCEDL) Multi-State Pre-Kindergarten Study and the Study of State-Wide Early Education Programs (SWEEP).

- 345 Spanish-speaking pre-kindergartners in 161 pre-k programs.
- Amount of Spanish spoken in the classroom varied.
- 89% live below 150% of the federal poverty level.
- About half of the teachers had Bachelor's degrees.
- 67% of the children attended pre-k in a public school building.
- 61% attended half-day programs.
- 61% of parents reported that their preschooler did not speak English at home.

Bilingual researchers used the *Emerging Academics Snapshot* to observe children's experiences within their classroom and measure teacher's language interactions. Teachers answered 38 questions in the fall and spring of pre-k regarding each child's social and behavior skills using the *Teacher-Child Rating Scale*. In the spring, teachers rated their relationship with the child using the *Student-Teacher Relationship Scale.*

For more information about NCEDL and SWEEP, visit
www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl

One in nine Americans, one in every four new entrants into the labor force and—in several states—one of every two children entering school is now of Hispanic descent. In little over a decade, today's Hispanic 1ST graders will constitute a significant percentage of the nation's working adults, according to the Education Commission of the States.

spoke Spanish more often were less likely to be the victims of aggression, bullying or teasing as rated by independent trained observers.

Teacher-Child Relationship

Teachers who used Spanish talked more frequently to Spanish-speaking children. These teachers also rated their relationship with Spanish-speaking children as closer than did teachers who spoke less Spanish. Teachers who spoke more English reported more problem behaviors and greater conflict in the teacher-child relationship.

Implications for Policy

"Given the increasing number of immigrant-born preschoolers, it is critical to more closely examine the claims made by the 'English-only' movement, particularly as they fuel public policy decisions," said Crawford.

Transitions can be difficult for all children, yet they may be magnified for English language learners. They do not have the English skills to gain academic knowledge or to foster relationships. |ed|

Quantity and Quality of Language Interactions

In the study, teachers used Spanish with Spanish-speaking children less than 20 percent of the time. And almost a quarter of Spanish-speaking children had teachers who never spoke a word of Spanish in the classroom. When speaking directly to Spanish-speaking students, teachers who did include Spanish still used English two-thirds of the time. When speaking to a group of children, teachers typically used English. Yet when teachers spoke Spanish, they had more elaborate conversations with the children.

Relationship of Language Interactions to Social Skills

The amount of Spanish that teachers spoke with children also was significantly related to teachers' ratings of children's frustration tolerance, assertiveness, task orientation and peer social skills; the higher the proportion of English interactions, the more likely that teachers said children had conduct and learning problems and a low tolerance for frustration.

In addition, the amount of Spanish spoken in a classroom related to bullying and teasing by peers. Spanish-speaking children with teachers who

To Learn More

Chang, F., Crawford, G., Early, D., & Bryant, D. (2007). Spanish speaking children's social and language development in pre-kindergarten classrooms. *Journal of Early Education and Development*, *18*(2), 243-269.

Summary of the Study
www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap41.pdf

Status and Trends in the Education of Hispanics
nces.ed.gov/pubs2003/2003008.pdf

The Progress of Education Reform 2004: Hispanic Achievement
www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/53/97/5397.pdf

Acknowledging and Reducing Stigmatization of African American Boys

A WHITE GIRL approached a research observer on a preschool's playground. Pointing to an African American boy, she announced, "He's bad. That's Jamal. He's bad."

Why did she say such a thing? How had Jamal already been labeled "bad" as a preschooler? What was happening in the preschool classroom to promote such ideas?

These are important questions. The achievement gap is fueled by a host of factors; but for some children, the dynamic that can so often lead to school failure begins in preschool situations such as the one described.

This article, adapted from a longer piece in the November 2006 issue of *Young Children*, explores many such

scenarios as observed by several young, White, college-educated women, who were hired and trained as observers for a study of pre-K program quality and outcomes. In teams of two, observers spent six days in each of more than 100 randomly selected classrooms recording their observations of instructional and emotional climate. The classrooms were in public schools and child care centers. The observations discussed in this article were not part of the study, nor do they meet the standards of scientific research. But they do highlight the concerns of trained observers and raise disturbing questions.

Consider that some educators believe expulsion an acceptable way to deal with difficult preschool children, and that African American boys bear the brunt of such punishments. They are expelled at twice the rate of White and Latino children. The disproportionate use of expulsion and other severe sanctions in the care and education of African American boys may unwittingly (and sometimes wittingly) convey the message that these young children are expendable. By raising awareness of the ways in which pre-K programs sometimes fail African

American boys the authors hoped to stimulate discussion about what to do to better serve children.

Segregation, Stigmatization, and Disparate Treatment

In many of the programs the observers visited, children were encouraged to work cooperatively in groups. However, in some pre-ᴋ and kindergarten programs, a single child was isolated at a separate desk next to the teacher. This practice was used to control the behavior of children whom teachers considered difficult and disruptive. The teachers justified their actions as the best way to keep a child on track while attending to others in the class. The children who were separated and excluded "were almost always boys of color," an observer reported. Another observer concurred, "I observed it over and over again. And it wasn't just [that it was only] boys. It was always, always, Black boys." The singling out of children in this way effectively assigned them to the stigmatized role of troublemaker or bad child as clearly as if the words had been stamped on their foreheads.

As seen in the opening story, stigmatizing roles become embedded in how children see one another. Stigma can quickly become a stable part of a child's social identity. Once in this role, children may be trapped and seldom seen again as good in the eyes of others. Even when behaving well much of the time, they may not be recognized for their good behavior.

Transforming Success into Failure

Perhaps most troubling to observers were instances in which children who appeared well behaved and academically promising in one classroom lost ground when excluded and stigmatized in a subsequent classroom. Over a period of two years, observers conducted individual assessments with children, which often meant observing the same child in different programs as the family moved or as the child progressed to kindergarten. An observer would watch a child be compliant, happy, and productive in one school or center, and then witness the apparent downward spiral of the child's behavior in a second center or school with different teaching practices and a different emotional climate. Ongoing contact with families of study children did not indicate any changes in home life that could have been influencing the children's behavior.

An observer reported, "I'm thinking of one child in particular who was really an intelligent, sweet, good-natured child, but in kindergarten somehow got labeled a bad kid and got seated at a separate desk. And I could see the self-fulfilling prophecy happening. He was being told he was a bad child, so he started to act that way. And I really noticed it [when I tested him on language and math]. He was doing it with me, acting out and testing me, and I found if I just ignored it and just kept encouraging him to be such a good listener, that his behavior corrected somewhat."

Teachers Expressing Hostility

It seems possible that some children come to feel badly about themselves because an early childhood teacher leads them to believe that they were responsible for her unhappy experiences. Take for example the case of one teacher, Bridget.

She was White, and all the children in her class were African American from a poor rural area. "She was acting so badly that we wondered, 'How does she act when we are not here writing things down?' For example, in our presence, she told the children that they were bad kids, that they made her not want to be a teacher, and that she was quitting her job and would not be with kids again because they were so bad."

Racially Disparate Punishment and Reward

In another class, punishment or favorable treatment from the teacher, Lisa, seemed to depend on the child's race. In Lisa's class, there were "12 White children and 8 [non-White]," an observer reported. "And the children who were not White were always in trouble with the teacher, always having privileges taken away, always in time out."

Lisa exhibited bias in acknowledging children's positive behavior, recognizing their competence, and providing access to desirable classroom activities. African American children were less likely to be called on when they raised their hands, less likely to be

invited to share during circle time, less likely to be allowed to choose a learning center to play in first. They were reprimanded for behaviors for which White children were not reprimanded.

Disparate treatment, segregating, and stigmatizing contribute to children's low self-esteem. These practices can dampen enthusiasm about school and decrease children's involvement in acquiring academic skills, thus keeping children from high levels of achievement. They may impose on children a psychological burden that is difficult to bear while simultaneously trying to master new skills.

Race, Gender, and Stigma

Some may ask, "Isn't it enough to disavow such practices as bad for all children? Why introduce race into the discussion?" But race is heavily implicated here, whether we acknowledge it or not. When African American children in general and boys in particular are stigmatized it seems imperative to consider the role of race.

In general, young boys often come to school boisterous, active, and independent. The difficulty arises from how teachers respond to these predictable behaviors. For Black boys, the observers noted that the response often falls at the ends of a continuum from overreacting to underreacting when most situations require a response that falls in the middle.

What Can Be Done to Achieve More Consistently Good Practices and Good Outcomes?

Reversing the apparent trend toward segregating misbehaving children requires not only thorough teacher training, supervision, mentoring, and support, but also special attention to relationships with families. Improving communication between home and

A Different Approach to Discipline

This article highlights observations of unnecessary or overly punitive discipline. Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) is a model that offers schools and classrooms a new approach to discipline—one that often can prevent problems before they arise.

PBIS relies on a tiered system approach. At the first level, schools establish a supportive environment. The U.S. Department of Education's Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports describes the first tier as follows:

> Practices that meet these criteria include teaching and rewarding students for complying with a small set of basic rules for conduct, such as "be safe, be responsible," and "be respectful." These rules translate into sets of expectations that differ according to various settings in the school.

Some children will need a more targeted intervention—a second tier. The Technical Assistance Center describes the second tier as follows:

> The main difference between secondary and other levels of positive behavior support is the focus on supporting students at risk for more serious problem behavior. Common secondary prevention practices involve small groups of students or simple individualized intervention strategies.

In rare cases, children will need highly focused interventions. The Technical Assistance Center describes this third tier as follows:

> The main difference between tertiary and other levels of positive behavior support is the focus of the interventions. It is support that is focused on meeting individual needs. The process should include the child with behavioral challenges and people who know the child best working together as a behavioral support team (BST).

For more information, visit the website of the U.S. Department of Education's Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports at www.pbis.org.

school, especially regarding expectations for behavior and strategies that motivate children to regulate their own behaviors, begins with the following steps by educators:

- Gaining self-awareness of our own attitudes and prejudices, identifying stereotypes,
- Challenging stereotypes, not allowing them to drive our behavior,
- Respecting differences in values,
- Ensuring flexibility in interactions with children, and
- Using a balance of warmth and firmness in dealing with challenging behaviors.

We Can Treat All Children Equally

The same observers who were troubled by what they witnessed in some classrooms also spent time in classrooms that made them feel hopeful about the quality of children's early childhood experiences. They described classrooms where all children seemed to feel valued and were enthusiastically engaged.

"[One] really [effective] teacher… was…totally involved and listening to the kids and wanting them to have input on what was going on in the class. During free time she…would move from group to group and [ask] 'What are you all doing?' And she would get involved in their scenarios …The whole feeling of that classroom was just, in a way, almost like a family in that I felt like all of the kids felt like they had a say. All of the kids. Everybody talked at circle time, everybody had an answer if there was a question. And she allowed everyone to answer even if [a child's] answer was the same as the last six. Everybody had a chance to be involved."

Another observer concluded her account by saying, "[The teachers] were so enthusiastic and loved their kids, and they were [in] the two most multiracial classrooms we [observed], too. Everyone was included."

Why are these teachers so successful at treating all the children in their classes equitably? Is it solely their personal qualities that make the difference? Did these teachers graduate from teacher education programs that prepared them to work with children from a wide range of cultural backgrounds? How might administrative supports be playing a role? These are questions worth pursuing in future research.

Conclusion

Considering questions of race and culture in early childhood programs is unavoidable because of the ethnic and economic diversity of children and families served. Nevertheless, conversations about race and racism are difficult and can be unproductive, especially when they begin with recrimination and denial and end with indignation and guilt.

The authors do not claim that racism or harmful practices are pandemic in early childhood classrooms or that they are the cause of every bad outcome for Black children. But race and culture are not trivial, minor issues; they play a major determining role in the nature of family life, resource acquisition, experiences, and practices. Race is a salient interpretive framework for making meaning of life events. The extent to which the underlying dynamic of the classrooms described is understood in racial terms is probably a function of one's world view, social experiences, personal background, goals, and values.

Failure to acknowledge the role of race in our society has perils. Programs risk failure if they ignore how some classroom practices may seem to stigmatize and denigrate children because of their race. Early in life too many African American children, particularly boys, come to learn that they are not valued by society. Their present and future well-being depends on the commitment of early childhood professionals at all levels. |ed|

Adapted from

Barbarin, O., & Crawford, G. M. (2006). Acknowledging and reducing stigmatization of African American boys. *Young Children, (61)*6, 79-87.

recently published

FPG research is published in the most respected journals and publications in the field. Below we highlight selected articles. A complete list of recent publications and citations can be found at www.fpg.unc.edu/products/cite_search.cfm.

Can Child Care Impact Risk for Depression?
www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap46.pdf

Young adults from low-income families who were in full-time early educational child care from infancy to age 5 reported fewer symptoms of depression than their peers who were not in this type of care, according to a new report. The early educational intervention also appears to have weakened the link between the characteristics of the early home environment and depressive symptoms years later.

McLaughlin, A., Campbell, F. A., Pungello, E. P., & Skinner, M. (2007). Early educational child care reduces depressive symptoms in young adults reared in low-income families. *Child Development, 78*(3), 746-756.

Examining Social Acceptance & Rejection
www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap44.pdf

Social status may optimize or mitigate the possible developmental benefits of inclusive preschool settings. The findings of this study suggest that a substantial proportion of children with disabilities may be well accepted in these settings. However, at least an equal proportion of children with disabilities may be at risk for social rejection by peers.

Odom, S. L., Zercher, C., Shouming, L., Marquart, J. M., Sandall, S., & Brown, W. H. (2006). Social acceptance and rejection of preschool children with disabilities: A mixed-method analysis. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*(4), 807-823.

Families Define Quality Pre-Kindergarten Programs More Broadly than Educators, Researchers and Policy Makers

www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap36.pdf

Families' definitions of quality are broader than researchers'. In addition to quality education and child care services, many families surveyed said having a location convenient to home or work was critical. In families with low incomes the availability of meals and extended flexible hours for single or working parents were important.

Barbarin, O., Bryant, D., McCandies, T., Burchinal, M., Early, D., Clifford, D., et al. (2006). Children enrolled in public pre-k: The relation of family life, neighborhood quality, and socioeconomic resources to early competence. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 76*(2), 265-276.

Improving Early Reading Skills for Children in Poverty

www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap47.pdf

Children in families with low incomes, who attend schools where the minority population exceeds 75 percent of the student enrollment, under-perform in reading. This is the case even after accounting for the quality of the literacy instruction, literary experiences at home, gender, race and other variables. The majority of black and Hispanic children in the United States attend such "minority segregated" schools, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

Kainz, K., & Vernon-Feagans, L. (2007). The ecology of early reading development for children in poverty. *The Elementary School Journal, 107*(5), 407-427.

Music Improves Morning Transitions for Children with Autism

www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap35.pdf

The study showed that when two children with autism were greeted by their teacher with a song highlighting the morning routine, their ability to independently complete that routine increased. Songs helped the children enter the classroom, greet the teacher and classmates, and engage in play.

Kern, P., Wolery, M., & Aldridge, D. (2007). Use of songs to promote independence in morning greeting routines for young children with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 37*(7), 1264-1271.

Music Therapy Engages Children with Autism in Outdoor Play

www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap39.pdf

The unstructured space, running, climbing, sliding, and loud nature of playground time can be overwhelming for children with autism who thrive on predictable and structured routines. As a result, these preschoolers often do not experience the learning and social development benefits from outdoor play seen in their typically developing classmates. However, this research suggests that music may help bridge the gap between children with autism and their peers.

Kern, P., & Aldridge, D. (2006). Using embedded music therapy interventions to support outdoor play of young children with autism in an inclusive community-based child care program. *Journal of Music Therapy, 43*(4), 270-294.

Preparing Culturally Competent Early Childhood Teachers

www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap37.pdf

Named the "Distinguished Article of 2005" by the *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education,* this study examines how early childhood personnel preparation programs are preparing professionals to develop much-needed cultural competency. The study looked at the literature on innovative models focusing on cultural and ability diversity and identified promising practices that could be adapted by other teacher educators in the field.

Lim, C. I., & Able-Boone, H. (2005). Diversity competencies within early childhood teacher preparation: Innovative practices and future directions. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education,* 26, 225-238.

Quality of Childcare Affects Language Development

www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap40.pdf

The study examines for the first time how the quality of child care affects the development of specific language components. All participants were demographically homogenous—white children of dual earner parents who had some level of higher education and were of middle income. In every measurement used, children in higher quality child care significantly outperformed those in lower quality child care. Children in higher quality care acquired key markers at a more rapid rate over time than the children in lower quality care.

Vernon-Feagans, L., Hurley, M. M., Yont, K. M., Wamboldt, P. M., & Kolak, A. (2007). Quality of childcare and otitis media: Relationship

to children's language during naturalistic interactions at 18, 24, and 36 months. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 28*(2), 115-133.

Relationship of English-Only to Young Children's Social and Language Skills

www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap41.pdf

Researchers showed that Spanish-speaking children with teachers who spoke some Spanish in the classroom were rated by their teachers as having better social skills and closer relationships with their teachers than children with teachers who did not speak Spanish in the classroom. Children experienced less bullying by their classmates, and teachers had a more positive view of these children.

Chang, F., Crawford, G., Early, D., Bryant, D., Howes, C., Burchinal, M., et al. (2007). Spanish speaking children's social and language development in pre-kindergarten classrooms. *Journal of Early Education and Development, 18*(2), 243-269.

Using Music to Improve Task Learning

www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap45.pdf

Singing a song can be an effective approach to multiple-step tasks for children with autism within inclusive classrooms. With the consultation of an occupational therapist and a musical therapist, the classroom teacher was able to integrate the song successfully within the daily classroom routine.

Kern, P., Wakeford, L., & Aldridge, D. (2007). Improving the performance of a young child with autism during self-care tasks using embedded song interventions: A case study. *Music Therapy Perspective, 25*(1), 43-51.

Why Young Children Enter Early Intervention Services

www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap38.pdf

This study examines the reasons why infants and toddlers entering Part C early intervention services are eligible. The findings yield important information about children receiving early intervention and have the potential to shape the services states provide and therefore the outcomes that children experience.

Scarborough, A., Hebbeler, K. M., & Spiker, D. (2006). Eligibility characteristics of infants and toddlers entering early intervention services in the United States. *Journal of Policy and Practice in Intellectual Disabilities, 3*(1), 57-64.

FPG Awarded $8 Million for Autism Research and Training

FPG RESEARCHERS will examine the effectiveness of two often-used classroom approaches for young children with autism. The project is one of two autism-related grants recently awarded to FPG and its partners at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The second project will establish a new national autism professional development center, which will help states incorporate effective practices for children with autism in classrooms, homes, and communities. The projects are funded by two separate grants totaling more than $8 million.

Autism is characterized by impairment in communication skills and social interactions, and repetitive patterns of behavior. In the past two decades the number of children diagnosed with autism has sky-rocketed twenty-fold by some estimates. This rapid increase has placed great demand on early intervention and education agencies to provide effective educational and intervention services for children and their families.

"Research shows that if we intervene early, we can greatly enhance the lives of children with autism. This new work will help ensure not only that children are diagnosed as early as possible, but that when they are diagnosed, they receive the most effective treatment by professionals who are prepared and knowledgeable," said Samuel L. Odom, FPG director and principal investigator for both grants.

The first project, funded by a $3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education Institute of Education Science, will compare two classroom-based approaches that follow different conceptual models. In one approach, the classroom environment and teaching are shaped to fit the characteristics of children with autism by, for example, minimizing distractions, using visual cues, and establishing highly predictable routines. The other emphasizes learning in regular early childhood curriculum activities with assistance from typically developing peers. Although both models are widely used, neither has been evaluated for its short or long-term impact on children with autism.

The second project is funded by a $5 million grant from the US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs. It will create a professional development center to work with states to increase the number of personnel prepared to teach children with autism and to promote early identification and diagnosis. This work will be completed through a partnership between FPG and UNC partners, the Waisman Center at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the MIND Institute at the University of California at Davis Medical School.

recent grants

Early Intervention Graduates at Kindergarten: Analyses of Outcomes from the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study
Funder: SRI International
Principal Investigator: Anita Scarborough
Duration: 7/01/2007–9/28/2009
This project is using data collected through the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study to examine the relationships between participation in different early intervention treatments and child outcomes at kindergarten entry.

Evaluation of the Disadvantaged Students Supplemental Funds
Funder: NC Dept. of Public Instruction
Principal Investigator: Gary Henry
Duration: 3/14/2007–2/29/2008
The evaluation is designed to enhance the impacts of the additional funding provided through the program on the achievement of academically disadvantaged students by providing trustworthy evidence about (1) the impact of the program on student outcomes and on the enabling goals concerning teachers, principals, and instruction, (2) the effectiveness of the specific strategies that were implemented in pilot districts, and (3) the efficacy of the help provided to participating districts by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Local Education Agency Assistance Program.

Additional Grants Awarded in This Fiscal Year

Access for All: Implementing the Fundamental Elements of Accessibility
Funder: NC Governor's Crime Commission
Principal Investigator: Karen Luken
Duration: 7/1/2007–6/30/2008
This grant is designed to promote statewide implementation of the Fundamental Elements of Accessibility to improve the accessibility of services for women with disabilities who are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

Developing a Comprehensive Part C Program General Supervision System
Funder: Wyoming Department of Health
Principal Investigator: Samuel Odom
Duration: 4/01/2007–3/31/2008
This project will provide technical assistance supports to the state of Wyoming to improve the design and implementation of the state system for general supervision for their IDEA Part C Infant and Toddlers Program.

Evaluation of the NC More at Four Program

Funder: NC State Board of Education
Principal Investigator: Ellen Peisner-Feinberg
Duration: 7/01/2007–6/30/2008
FPG has been conducting the statewide evaluation of the NC More at Four Pre-kindergarten Program since its inception in 2002. The evaluation provides detailed information on the characteristics of the classrooms, teachers, and children involved in the program. These data allow evaluation of the characteristics and numbers of children being served by More at Four, the quality of the services provided, the outcomes of children attending the program, and the factors associated with better outcomes for children.

NC Office on Disability and Health

Funder: NC Department of Health and Human Services
Principal Investigator: Karen Luken
Duration: 7/1/2007–9/30/2007
The North Carolina Office on Disability and Health focuses on building the state's capacity to address the health promotion and prevention needs of individuals with disabilities through health promotion initiatives and surveillance activities.

Partnerships for Inclusion (PFI) for the Early Intervention Branch

Funder: NC Division of Public Health
Principal Investigator: Patricia Wesley
Duration: 7/01/2007–6/30/2008
PFI is providing professional development activities to North Carolina's early care and education workforce to promote high quality inclusive experiences for young children with and without special needs.

Partnerships for Inclusion (PFI) Technical Assistance for the Governor's Office of School Readiness

Funder: NC Department of Public Instruction
Principal Investigator: Patricia Wesley
Duration: 1/15/2007–11/30/2007
PFI is providing professional development activities to North Carolina's early care and education workforce to promote high quality inclusive experiences for young children with and without special needs.

Ready to Learn Project

Funder: Michael Cohen Group LLC
Principal Investigator: Ellen Peisner-Feinberg
Duration: 4/01/2007–9/14/2008
The purpose of this project is to evaluate the effectiveness of various television series curricula focused on the development of language and literacy skills. The evaluation work includes both formative and summative components, including assessment of implementation fidelity and child outcomes.

Recognition and Response: From Theory to Practice

Funder: Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation
Principal Investigator: Mary Ruth Coleman
Duration: 1/01/2007–12/31/2007
The project is developing implementation guidelines for a conceptual approach, "Recognition and Response," for young children who show early signs of learning disabilities.

Speech and Language Trajectories of Girls with Fragile X Syndrome (FXS)

Funder: March of Dimes Foundation
Principal Investigator: Joanne Roberts
Duration: 6/01/2007–5/31/2010
The major goals are to identify how biological, child, and environmental factors contribute to language development of girls with FXS and to compare developmental profiles of language and language use.

Technical Assistance Between Tuscorora Intermediate Unit 11 and NECTAC

Funder: Tuscarora Intermediate Unit 11
Principal Investigator: Samuel Odom
Duration: 2/09/2007–6/30/2007
FPG provided technical assistance support to local programs in Pennsylvania in the provision of services related to IDEA Part B, Section 619, and Part C Infant and Toddlers Program, in collaboration with the PA State Early Childhood TA System.

Western Regional Resource Center TA Project

Funder: University of Oregon
Principal Investigator: Samuel Odom
Duration: 1/15/2007–5/31/2007
The project provided technical assistance to state IDEA, Part C Infant and Toddler Programs in the Western Region, including Washington, Oregon, Alaska, Idaho, California, Nevada, and the Pacific jurisdictions. FPG supported the Western Regional Resource Center in providing expertise in areas challenging to the implementation of early intervention.

New Podcast Shares Latest Research on Early Child Development

FPG Voices early childhood research & news

FPG VOICES, a new monthly podcast series produced by FPG provides parents, child care providers, policymakers, and early childhood professionals with the latest research findings in early childhood development. Download podcasts at www.fpg.unc.edu/news/podcasts.cfm.

Each episode of the FPG Voices podcast features an interview with a researcher to inform listeners about a study recently published in a peer-reviewed journal. The interviews are designed to describe the findings and their potential impact to the broader public.

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