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early developments Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Fall 2002 | Volume 6, Issue 3
Child & Family Policy


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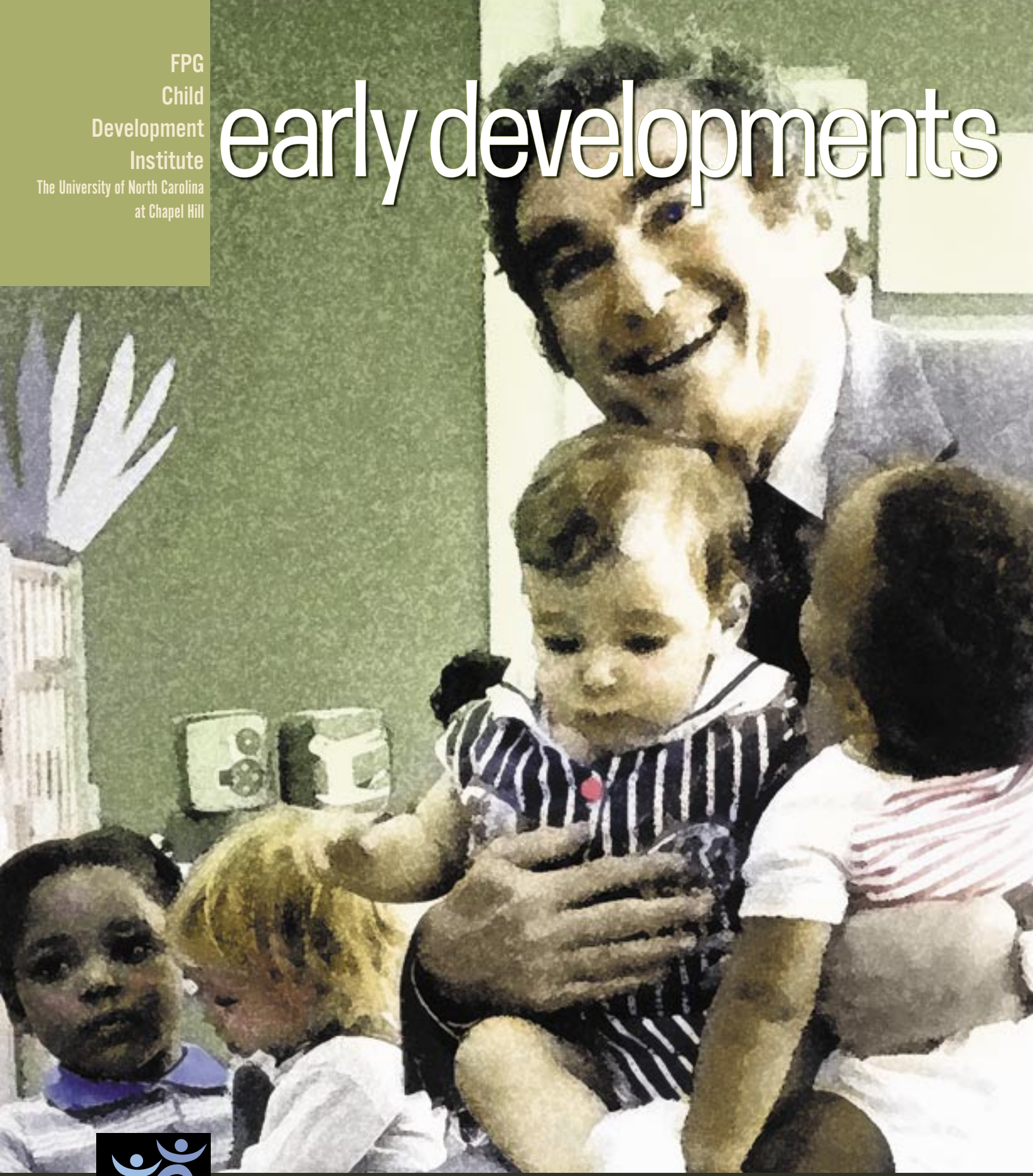

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news

MARY RUTH COLEMAN, FPG Scientist and Clinical Associate Professor in the UNC-CH School of Education, was recently elected for a three-year term to the Board of Directors of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). CEC is the largest organization for special educators, individuals with special needs and their families in the world.

LYNETTE AYTCH, FPG Investigator, was recently elected to the Board of the Division of Early Childhood (DEC), a sub-division of CEC.

PAM WINTON, FPG Senior Scientist and Director of Outreach and Research Professor in the UNC-CH School of Education, now serves as Associate Editor of the *Journal of Early Intervention.*

ELEANOR RICHARDSON, longtime volunteer and former employee in the nursery of the FPG Child Development Institute, received this year's C. Knox Massey Distinguished Service Award for "unusual, meritorious or superior contributions" by UNC employees. Honorees receive an award citation and a $5,000 stipend.

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Informing Public Policy

by Don Bailey, Director

If investigators at the FPG Institute studied astronomy, we probably would not be concerned about public policy. But since our work focuses almost exclusively on programs and services for children and families, it is of enormous relevance to policy makers. These individuals in local, state and federal government must make decisions about which programs to fund, how much money to allocate and what regulations are needed to assure equitable access and achieve the program's desired outcomes.

Just think about the array of laws and regulations that directly affect children and families. Head Start represents a large federal commitment to improving the health and development of children living in poverty. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires free, appropriate, public education for all children with disabilities and provides financial incentives and guidelines to assure that states comply with this requirement. And the list goes on. Welfare reform, childcare subsidies, Medicaid, child care regulations and state initiatives for prekindergarten programs all represent policy decisions that commit public resources and establish standards by which those resources are to be used.

How are public policy decisions made? Research informs public policy, but ultimately policy decisions are based on factors that include cost, public demand, timing and politics. Policy research attempts to understand the various factors influencing policy development. Policy research also examines specific policies and determines whether they really result in the intended outcomes.

Jim Gallagher, former director of FPG, has always believed in the power of policy to make a real difference in the lives of children. He should know. In 1967 he was asked to serve as Associate Commissioner of Education, and Chief of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped in the US Department of Education. This was a very prestigious appointment, as the BEH had just been established and the role of the federal government in the lives of exceptional children was just beginning to be formulated. Jim's work at the Department of Education had a profound influence on setting standards and directions for a federal role, and his mark on the department can still be seen today in what is now known as the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services.

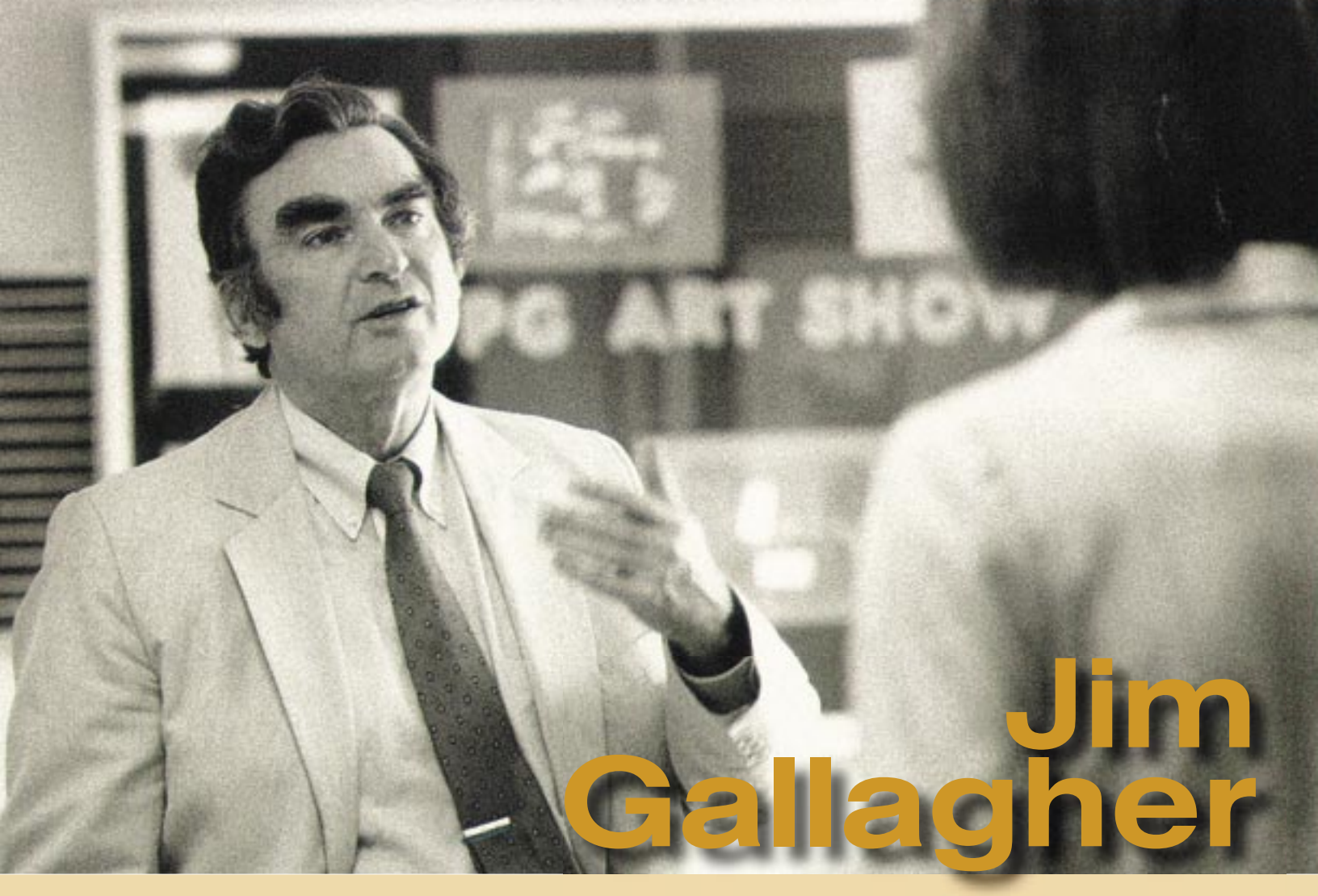
When he came to FPG, he began a series of policy studies that have helped the field understand the role of policy and what it takes for policy to be implemented effectively at the local level. He trained several generations of policy researchers, and his influence is evident both here at FPG and in many places around the country.

As an institute, we try to shape policy by providing information to help policy makers make informed decisions. We distinguish this work from advocacy, in which an individual or organization pushes for a particular piece of legislation or funding. Many advocacy groups exist, and they play an extremely important role in fostering social change. What we can do is provide objective information and systematic analysis of issues so that both policy makers and advocates will have as many facts at their disposal for weighing the costs and benefits of various programs.

This issue of *Early Developments* highlights some of the policy work currently underway at FPG. We also use this issue as an opportunity to celebrate the many contributions Jim Gallagher has made to the field and his influence on the current generation of policy researchers.

On a personal note, I have now served as director of FPG for 10 years. Jim Gallagher was one of the major reasons I joined the center and his legacy as director has continued to serve as both a challenge and an inspiration for me. Never one to interfere, but always available to listen and support, he is often the first in line to volunteer to help with any project. I was hoping to catch up with him someday, but Jim, you are one of a kind. Carry on! |ed|

FPG Photo Archives



Jim Gallagher

Legend & Legacy in Special Education

If there were a Special Education Hall of Fame, Jim Gallagher surely would be an inductee. A number of people have earned renown in special education for their research, teaching, or policy-making, but few have made significant contributions in all three fields. Jim Gallagher, FPG Senior Scientist and Kenan Professor Emeritus of Education, is that rare exception.

"Jim Gallagher is a protean source of ideas, enthusiasm and collegiality," says Rud Turnbull, co-director of the Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas. "His ideas began with his seminal concept of an individualized education contract and have carried through to his most recent work-in-progress, his treatise on special education policy. His enthusiasm has never waned; that is because it is undergirded by a deep commitment to students with disabilities and their families and professional providers, and because he brings an infectious buoyancy to his work."

On September 26, FPG will sponsor a symposium to honor Gallagher for his nearly five decades of contributions on behalf of the education of gifted children and children with disabilities. Such events are usually reserved for an individual about to enter retirement. In Gallagher's case, the energetic Irishman will accept his accolades and return to the field.

Nationally and internationally, Gallagher may be best known for his research and writing, if for no other reason than he has produced so much of both. The articles, monologues and books that he has authored or co-authored number well over 200. It is rare to discover a student of special education who is not familiar with at least one of his textbooks. *Teaching the Gifted Child* (Allyn & Bacon),

now in its fourth edition, has been called the Bible on the subject of educating gifted children. *Educating Exceptional Children* (Houghton Mifflin), coauthored with Sam Kirk and Nick Anastasiow, has been through 10 editions and serves as the introductory text to many courses on special education for children.

As long as he has been a researcher, Gallagher has been a teacher. He began in 1954 as an assistant professor at the University of Illinois, eventually rising to Associate Director of the university's Institute for Research on Exceptional Children. In 1970, he was named Kenan Professor of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Over his 30 years of teaching at that institution, he trained many graduate students who went on to become leading professionals in the field, including Ron Haskins, former senior staff person for the House Ways and Means Committee and now a welfare reform specialist in the Bush administration.

As a teacher, Gallagher sought to bridge what he perceived as a gap between academicians and politicians in communicating and understanding early childhood education issues. In the mid-70s, he secured funding from the Bush Foundation (part of 3M Company) to put together a program of biweekly seminars on policy making for doctoral students in early childhood education. Many of his former students who are now practicing professionals fondly remember Gallagher's instruction on how to translate knowledge into political action.

"Because he'd worked on Capitol Hill, Jim knew as much about the politics of special education as he did about research," says Pam Winton, a former student at UNC and now Senior Scientist at FPG. "He taught us how to use research findings in a way to impact policy, how to think about problems in a way that could translate into results.

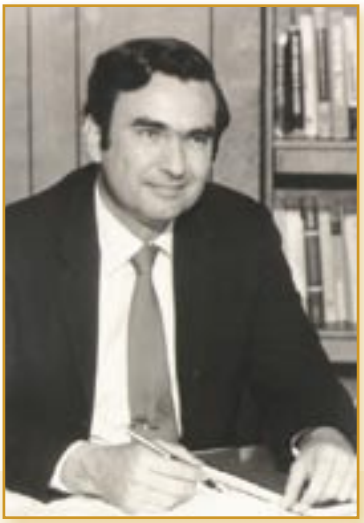
"Jim was the person who introduced me to the term 'RFP'," Winton laughs. "He taught us how to get money from the federal government to actually fund programs benefiting children with special needs."

As well as being a world-class researcher and educator, Gallagher became a heavy hitter in the field of public policy. In 1967, John Gardener, then head of the US Department of Education under President Lyndon Johnson, tapped Gallagher to head the newly formed Bureau of Education for the Handicapped. Key members of Congress had indicated support for a program supporting preschool age children with special needs. Gallagher and his team responded by devising a demonstration program directing federal funds to 20 exemplary programs supporting young children with disabilities.

"Few in America recognized the importance of linking child development research to social policy as early as Jim Gallagher did," says Lynn Kagan, Professor of Early Childhood and Family Policy at Columbia University Teachers College. "Even fewer had a keen sense of how it could and should be done."

Later, as Director of FPG, Gallagher proposed to the Bureau to develop a system of technical assistance for these demonstration programs. FPG later won a contract to do just that and proceeded to develop a national system of technical assistance now known as NECTAC (see page 11).

"This support system of technical assistance strengthened already good programs and brought credibility to the demonstration center program," Gallagher says. "The program gradually increased its membership and became a visible example of what could be done to help young children with disabilities."



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Career Highlights

1954
appointed Assistant Professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana. Later named Associate Director of the Institute for Research on Exceptional Children

1967
named Associate Commissioner of Education at the U.S. Office of Education and Chief of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped

1967
J.E. Wallace Wallin Award for Contributions to Special Education, Council for Exceptional Children

1970
hired as Director of Frank Porter Graham Center and Kenan Professor of Education at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

1972
John Fogarty Award for Distinguished Government Service

1986
Distinguished Scholar Award, National Association of Gifted Children

A longtime acquaintance of the Kennedy family, Gallagher was asked in 1970 to participate in a series of meetings they were sponsoring on mental retardation. In his paper entitled "A Special Education Contract," Gallagher argued that schools should develop an individualized education contract with each child with special needs, one that specifies what services are being provided for the child and who will provide them. These elements were eventually included in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that is now part of the federal IDEA law.

A few years after his presentation at the Kennedy symposium, Gallagher was called upon to testify on behalf of the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) in a suit it had filed against the State of Pennsylvania. Despite having a line in its constitution saying all children were entitled to a public education, Pennsylvania had a policy of excluding children from public school who were deemed not ready for kindergarten. "The relevant question was, can these children learn something useful?" Gallagher says. "I was one of four expert witnesses who asserted the answer was 'yes.'"

The court subsequently ruled that Pennsylvania had to admit those students into the public schools. That case is now looked upon as a landmark in the special education field and helped lead to the formulation and passage of the federal Education for All Handicapped Children Act, the predecessor of IDEA. "It was Jim Gallagher who, as expert witness for the then-excluded students in the landmark PARC case, brought his knowledge to bear to lay the foundation of IDEA," Turnbull says.

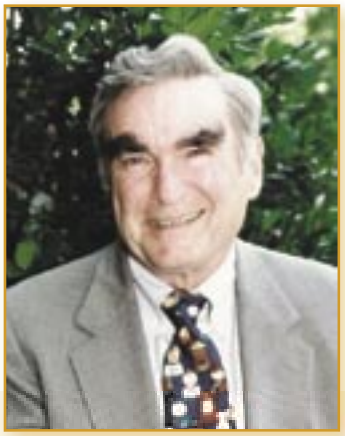
At FPG, Gallagher developed a special interest in the educational needs of gifted children. Though some states like North Carolina included gifted children in their definition of exceptional children, programs to help such children were not widespread, and those that did exist tended to serve kids who needed the least help. Working with the State of North Carolina, Gallagher set up nine model centers that helped school districts plan programs to identify and serve gifted children, particularly those from poor backgrounds. On the basis of this work, North Carolina revised its laws for dealing with gifted children. Now, all local school districts must have a broad-based plan for identifying and serving gifted children.

Recently, Gallagher has turned his attention to what he describes as the missing support infrastructure for teachers dealing with children with special needs. "The teacher is the point person in providing services for these children, but there is no systematic support program behind them," he says. "The shortage of special education teachers is widespread. Many are retiring. If teachers had more of a support system, they would feel part of a team. You would attract more teachers to the profession and retain more of them for longer periods of time."

Gallagher is now writing a book entitled *Decision-making on Special Education,* addressing such issues as how much to spend on special education and how to integrate it into general education. Asked why he continues to work, Gallagher cites a quote from anthropologist Loren Eisely:

We cannot know all that has happened in the past or the reason for all these events, any more than we can with surety discern what lies ahead. We have joined the caravan…at a certain point. We will travel as far as we can, but we cannot in one lifetime see all that we would like to see or learn all that we hunger to know.

Says Gallagher, "I still hunger to know and teach what I know." **|ed|**



FPG Photo Archives

1987
appointed as Director of the Gifted Policy Studies Program and Director of the Carolina Institute for Child and Family Policy at the University of North Carolina

1994
named co-director of the Statewide Technical Assistance for Gifted Education Program at the University of North Carolina

1995
Distinguished Service to the Field of Gifted Education and Leadership as President of the National Association of Gifted Children

1997
Distinguished Service Award, World Council for Gifted and Talented Children

2000
Lifetime Service for Exceptional Children, North Carolina Department of Public Education; Eighth Annual Razor Walker Award, UNC-Wilmington

Welfare Reform

The Impact on

James Carroll, Artville, A Kid's World

Emily, welfare recipient and caregiver of a 3-year-old daughter with severe visual impairments and developmental delays, has been informed by her caseworker that she needs to find a job. Emily says she would like to work, but needs to be at home to meet with the various therapists who come during the day to work with her child. Emily also has to take her daughter to three other sites for educational and therapeutic services. On top of this, Emily is worried about losing Medicaid for her daughter if she goes back to work. She is certain no private insurance company would cover her daughter in light of her pre-existing conditions. Emily lives in Illinois, one of the 28 states that do not exempt caregivers of persons with disabilities from time limits for welfare benefits. Seeking to enforce the time limit, Emily's caseworker insists that Emily must be creative in finding child care and getting a job. This mandate is adding another layer of stress to Emily's already fragile existence, and threatens to undermine her family's ability to function.

Families with Members with Disabilities

THE MAJOR GOAL OF WELFARE REFORMS instituted in 1996 is to move welfare recipients to work. For many caregivers of children with disabilities, this transition can be especially challenging. Exactly how the new work requirements and time limits affect the lives of these families is revealed through a project entitled "The Impact of Welfare Reform on Families with Members with Disabilities."

Headed by FPG Scientist Debra Skinner with funding from the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation/USDHHS, the project is part of a larger study, "Welfare, Children, and Families: A Three City Study," being conducted in the cities of Boston, Chicago and San Antonio. The Three-City Study monitors the consequences of welfare reform on the well being of children and families through surveys of approximately 2,400 low-income families, video-taped assessments of 630 children and their caregivers and ethnographic observations and interviews with 256 families.

Skinner's study focuses primarily on the experiences of 42 families of young children with disabilities. Interviews and observations with these families over a three-year period provide a rich picture of how disability, poverty and welfare reform converge to impact their lives and well-being. With the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) in 1996, a new program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), limits the time that families can receive cash assistance. It also requires beneficiaries to participate in work-related activities.

... a significant portion of the caregivers of children with disabilities had physical or mental health conditions themselves...

Skinner's research shows that for low-income persons who must care for a child with disabilities, finding full-time or even part-time work that doesn't put the child at risk is difficult. "All caregivers in the study expressed the desire to work, but some of them are unwilling to leave their young child who may need round-the-clock care," Skinner says. "Lack of child care slots for children with moderate or severe disabilities and lack of flexibility in the workplace are major barriers. Also, many jobs that these caregivers qualify for do not offer health coverage at all, or policies will not cover a child with preexisting conditions. Caregivers fear the loss of Medicaid coverage if they go back to work, and fear that their children's health and access to services will suffer."

Skinner found that a significant portion of the caregivers of children with disabilities had physical or mental health conditions themselves that limited their ability to work and carry out daily routines. "We were surprised at the high rate of poor health of mothers and other family members," Skinner says. "For the most part, these families do a tremendous job of piecing together services for their children and garnering the emotional and physical resources needed to support their families. However, these efforts take a physical and emotional toll."

Given these barriers, Skinner says it may not be feasible for some caregivers of young children with disabilities to enter the workforce. If not exempted from time limits, the loss of TANF benefits may pose further hardships for them and their children. "If they are to work, these families require a range of supports including appropriate child care and flexible workplaces," Skinner says. "Supports that would aid these families

Abraham Menashe, Challenging Perceptions, digitalvision

include extending transitional Medicaid until other health care coverage could be obtained. For parents or other caregivers of children with disabilities who are required to work, work participation could become more broadly defined to include caring for the child with disabilities, or participation in training programs for specialized care, service coordination and parent advocacy for children with disabilities. In the workplace, employees need to become aware of the difference disability may make for families, and offer some flexibility to allow caregivers to deal with their children's special health care needs. For caregivers with disabilities, targeted and appropriate job training and placement should be offered."

Skinner found that agencies that work with families in poverty are rarely aware of disability issues and the programs that serve persons with disabilities. Conversely, agencies that work with persons with disabilities are often not familiar with poverty programs. "What would help support low-income families with members with disabilities is for each type of agency to become aware of the other, and to collaborate in referring families to appropriate programs and services for those in poverty or with disabilities," she says.

PRWORA is up for reauthorization this year. So far in the debate, little attention has focused on the needs of low-income families of children with disabilities. "In the reauthorization of welfare reform, it is important that the more vulnerable members of our society not be disproportionately impacted," Skinner says. "I hope our study and others like it will raise state and federal policy-makers' awareness of the impact of welfare reform on families of children with disabilities and will lead to instituting the necessary supports to help families care for their children and obtain economic security." **|ed|**

For more information

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The web site for the larger project for which this is a component is **www.jhu.edu/~welfare**

Supporting IDEA

With a contract from the US Office of Special Education Programs, FPG has launched the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) to help support the implementation of early childhood provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Center will replace NECTAS, which has provided support to the states in early childhood services for nearly 30 years.

"We believe the new TA Center will carry on and build upon the tradition, commitment and foundation of the NECTAS project," says Pascal "Pat" Trohanis, director of NECTAC. "Our new contract demands a more focused approach to TA—one that seeks to influence early childhood service systems in a way that leads to more positive outcomes for young children and their families."

Since the passage of IDEA, states have made considerable progress in implementing the early childhood provisions of the law. Challenges remain, however, in assuring that all eligible children and families receive and benefit from high-quality services that address their unique priorities. NECTAC's mission is to strengthen service systems to ensure that children with disabilities and their families receive and benefit from high-quality, culturally appropriate and family-centered supports and services.

Trohanis believes that for NECTAC's assistance to yield improved results for children and families, a multilevel systems change approach is needed. Toward that end, NECTAC will target state infrastructure, personnel development, community infrastructure, service providers and practices and individual children and families.

NECTAC employs various strategies, including strategic planning, consultations, workshops, information materials, teleconferences and contributions to a topically focused web site: **www.nectac.org**. To make their information more widely available, NECTAC is affiliating with the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) as an adjunct clearinghouse for information on early intervention and early childhood special education.

As the prime contractor, FPG will work closely with two key subcontracting organizations--the National Association of State Directors of Special Education in Alexandria, VA, and the Parents Advocacy Coalition for Education Rights (PACER) in Minneapolis, MN. |**ed**|

Pat Trohanis

national early childhood TA Center

IDEAs ▯ partnerships ▯ results

a seamless system of services?

Gloria Harbin

In recent years the number of federal and state programs designed to help young children with special needs in this country has grown dramatically. Programs such as Head Start, Even Start and early intervention offer families of young children an array of services and supports. Altogether, these programs should form a seamless system allowing children and families to get the services they need with minimal hassle. But how easy is it for a family to learn about these services and access them? How comprehensive are early intervention services and how well-coordinated across different agencies and programs? FPG Scientist Gloria Harbin has studied these questions since 1986 and her findings are revealing.

Early intervention services consist of many types of services that address children's health and development as well as supports for their families. No one agency or program offers all of the therapies or special services that an individual child or family may need. As a result, families often must seek the services and supports they need from more than one agency. Although coordinating these child and family services offered by various agencies makes sense and is federally mandated, state early intervention systems have found this difficult to achieve. The lack of coordination stems largely from the fact that each of the federal programs was developed separately—with their own mission, mandates and ways of determining who is eligible for services.

Over the years, Congress has heard testimonies of families being bounced from one agency to another; of professionals who did not communicate with each other and gave families conflicting information; of agencies' failures to refer a child to another agency that provided the service the child was eligible to receive; of family members having to quit their jobs to devote time to finding the service their children really needed; and of families providing the same family history or assessment results over and over to each agency. The lack of coordinated early intervention services has meant that some children have experienced long delays in obtaining the services they needed or, worse yet, have not received the services at all.

In 1986, Congress passed the Infant-Toddler Program, Part C of the Individuals with disabilities Education Act, which included, among other things, a remedy to this problem. A comprehensive system for early intervention, coordinated across multiple agencies and disciplines at both the system and individual level was a key component of the new legislation. Since the law's passage,

Harbin has studied the effectiveness of the federal requirements that early intervention services be integrated and coordinated across programs and agencies. She is among the few researchers to do this on a national scale.

Harbin's research has focused on the state and local levels where most of these programs are housed and administered. Her state-level studies, conducted primarily between 1987 and 1992, analyzed the amount of coordination, approaches to coordination, agreements among agencies, structures and linkages to facilitate coordination and outcomes of coordination. At the local level, Harbin has analyzed nine communities in three states from 1992 to 1997. She is still following three of those communities and has been studying all communities in North Carolina for the last four years.

Harbin has identified six levels of coordination at the state and local level. Her recent research indicates that most states are using one of the three less comprehensive and coordinated models. "In general, states have not put together a comprehensive system of services," Harbin says. "Most focus only on a child's educational and therapeutic needs."

The result, she says, is that adults and children with disabilities in many communities do not feel supported, but instead feel unwelcome and stigmatized by their community.

By contrast, communities such as Canyon City, CO, that took an integrated approach to providing services yielded a much higher degree of satisfaction and sense of belonging among families in need. "We found the best outcomes for kids in the broadest and most coordinated service systems, those that were designed to serve all children and their families," Harbin says. "In other words, children with disabilities are more likely to receive better services if communities begin to plan more cohesive and integrated systems for children rather than allowing programs to function in isolation." Harbin said that a parent in her study said it best: "We never ran into the walls of the system in Canyon City like we did in the community where we previously lived."

...an integrated approach to providing services yielded a much higher degree of satisfaction and sense of belonging among families in need.

Based on her findings, Harbin sees a need for communities across the nation to integrate ***all*** programs for ***all*** children and families into a cohesive whole. She admits there are significant political, financial and psychological barriers to doing this. The single most important ingredient to accomplishing integration, she says, is leadership.

"The presence of leadership or the lack of it is a major key to success or failure," she says. "We need university programs that will train a generation of community leaders who have a vision of interagency cooperation and a comprehensive system of services and resources that supports and actively nurtures the development of *all* children in the community, instead of only some of the children. **|ed|**

Six Levels of Service Coordination*

1. Single program
2. Network of programs beginning to coordinate
3. Primary coordination with intervention, secondary coordination with other agencies
4. Multiagency system with some leadership coming from lead agency
5. Multiagency system—leadership and decision making dispersed among agencies
6. LICC is lead agency for comprehensive and cohesive system for all children

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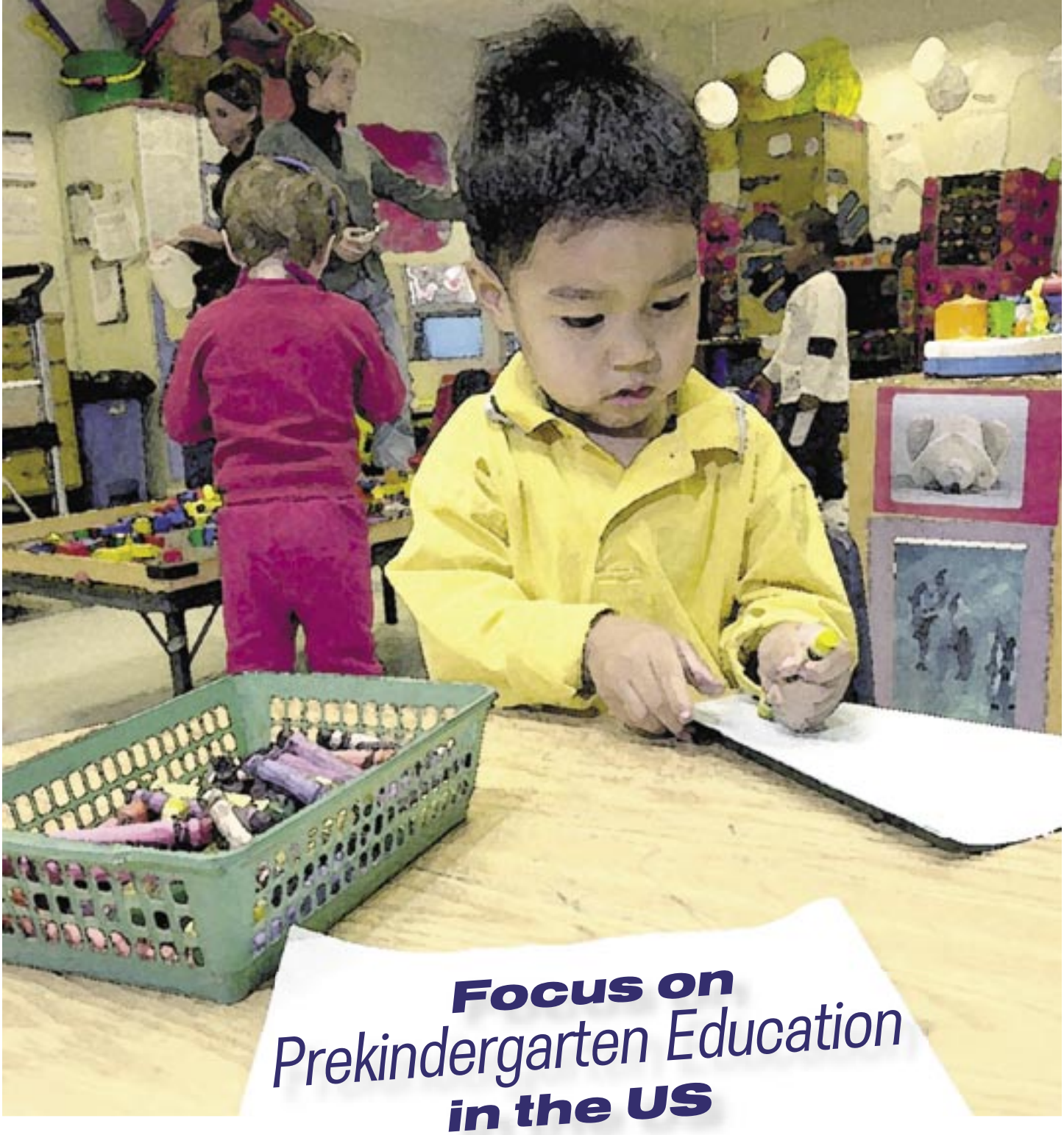
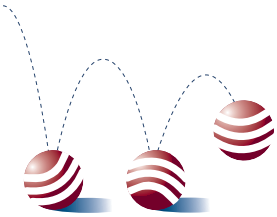


Focus on Prekindergarten Education in the US

WITH MORE MOTHERS OF YOUNG CHILDREN entering the workforce and a growing recognition of the importance of early learning experiences in preparing children for school, the American public and educators alike are focusing on the need for high-quality prekindergarten programs for 4-year-olds. Many other countries already offer universal prekindergarten programs for 3- and 4-year-olds. In the US, federal and state governments have been reluctant to assume responsibility for educating children prior to school entry into kindergarten, but that appears to be changing. At least 42 states currently offer some type of prekindergarten program, and a few such as Georgia, Oklahoma and New York are moving towards a voluntary prekindergarten program for *all* 4-year-olds.

Adding import to this national trend is the passage of President Bush's No Child Left Behind Act in January 2002 (**www.NoChildLeftBehind.gov**). This law seeks to ensure that public schools are teaching students what they need to know to be successful in life. It also draws attention to the need to prepare children for academic success before they start formal schooling. In response to this new educational policy agenda, FPG has launched two major initiatives—the NCEDL Multi-State Prekindergarten Study and a National Prekindergarten Center (NPC) to assist states in the development of high-quality prekindergarten programs.



NCEDL Multi-State Study

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, states are rapidly expanding school-linked prekindergarten programs at a cost exceeding $2.9 billion. Although these efforts are commendable, states are launching these programs without basic knowledge about the nature of prekindergarten policies and services or of the implications of decisions about the basic design of the programs. The National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), housed at FPG, seeks to close this information gap through a multi-state study of prekindergarten services.

"It's amazing how little is known about these programs," says Donna Bryant, co-director of the study along with Richard Clifford. "Does it matter if there's a lot of reading in these programs, if it's full-day or half-day? These are the kinds of things states should know."

"Some states have conducted individual studies of prekindergarten services, but each study uses different measures, so we can't compare results across states." Clifford adds, "While there have been major national studies of Head Start, child care and early intervention, there has not been a single large-scale, multi-state study of prekindergarten services. Given the amount of state and federal money going into these programs, the need for such a study is urgent."

NCEDL's Multi-State Prekindergarten Study has two primary purposes: 1) to describe the variations of experiences for children in prekindergarten and the impact of these variations on children's basic development, and 2) to examine the degree to which the prekindergarten experiences prepare children for kindergarten and early schooling.

Primary questions being researched include the education and experience of teachers and teacher assistants in school-linked prekindergarten programs; the nature and distribution of practices in areas such as literacy, math and teacher-child relationships; how quality and practices vary as a function of child and teacher characteristics and classroom and program variables; and whether children's outcomes can be predicted by their experiences in prekindergarten programs.

Prior to launching the study, NCEDL conducted a survey of state-level personnel in every state and the nation's capital to learn about state-funded and other school-related prekindergarten services, class size, ratios, teacher education and other structural features. Based on that survey, NCEDL selected six states for the larger study—California, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, New York and Ohio.

Twenty-four data collectors, four in each state, have been trained and sent into the field armed with questionnaires and assessment materials. They have visited 240 preschool classes, 40 picked at random in each state. Four children in each classroom, also picked at random, are being followed. Researchers are currently conducting the second round of data collection on these children as they move from the prekindergarten classes into kindergarten. Data collection will be complete in May 2003.

In addition to assessing classrooms teachers and students, FPG Fellow Oscar Barbarin (also on the faculty of the UNC-CH School of Social Work) is leading a part of the study examining the child's home environment. Researchers are conducting one-on-one interviews with parents to find out about family activities, parent attitudes toward education and the school and childrearing practices.

The NCEDL researchers would like to follow the children into the first and second grade, and are currently seeking additional funds to support this work. Collecting data as the children move from the prekindergarten classes into kindergarten and beyond will be difficult with the children scattering out to different schools.

NCEDL is a collaborative effort of researchers at FPG working with colleagues at the University of Virginia under the direction of Bob Pianta and at the University of California at Los Angeles under the direction of Carollee Howes. Other key researchers at FPG include Senior Scientist Peg Burchinal and Scientist Diane Early.

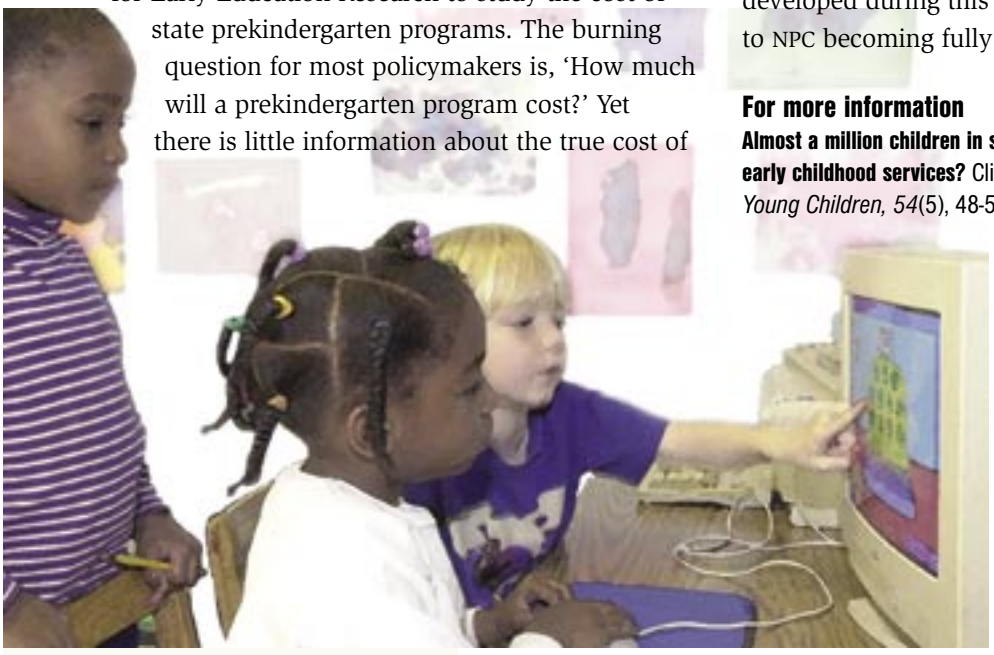
National Prekindergarten Center

UP TO THE PRESENT, states and local school districts have been launching prekindergarten programs with little technical assistance. No single organization provides research-based information to help guide prekindergarten policies and practices. To help fill this need, FPG has started planning a National Prekindergarten Center (NPC) with a one-year grant from the Foundation for Child Development.

"We envision our mission as helping local, state and federal leaders develop and implement high quality universal prekindergarten programs through our research, policy analysis, technical assistance and communications," says Kelly Maxwell, who co-directs the center with Dick Clifford. Maxwell directed North Carolina's statewide school readiness assessment and co-directs the evaluation of North Carolina's Smart Start early childhood initiative.

High-quality prekindergarten programs are being launched not only in the public schools, but also Head Start centers, and community-based childcare centers. Many states are using classrooms in all three types of programs to provide prekindergarten services."

The National Prekindergarten Center will be housed at FPG, but will partner with various organizations that address prekindergarten issues. "For us to be effective, we will need to develop strategic partnerships across the country," Clifford says. "For example, NCEDL and NPC are working together with Steve Barnett at the National Institute for Early Education Research to study the cost of state prekindergarten programs. The burning question for most policymakers is, 'How much will a prekindergarten program cost?' Yet there is little information about the true cost of prekindergarten. We hope to gather the information needed to help states understand the real cost of providing high quality prekindergarten services for children."



In addition to finance, NPC will focus its long-term efforts on governance and professional development. Governance concerns the respective roles of federal, state and local governments in administrating prekindergarten programs. "Simply put, the question is 'Who's in charge of what?'" Clifford says. "For K-12 education, state and local governments are primarily responsible for educating their children, with the federal government providing some support and technical assistance. In the prekindergarten arena, the roles are still unclear."

Professional development addresses the shortage of qualified teachers in prekindergarten programs. It is estimated that less than half of the current teachers of 3- and 4-year-olds in this country have a BA degree. "Research has shown that highly qualified teachers conduct more enriching classes," Maxwell says. "States will have to work very hard to train a sufficient number of teachers to meet the growing prekindergarten needs."

As NPC ends its planning year, Clifford and Maxwell are seeking additional funding from the Foundation for Child Development and other funding sources. NPC is already involved in research and policy work and will begin offering technical assistance during 2003. "We're excited about the new opportunities and working relationships that we've developed during this planning year and are looking forward to NPC becoming fully operational," Clifford says. |ed|

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