

2019 IMPACT REPORT



FRANK PORTER GRAHAM
CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



FPG is committed to promoting social justice and racial equity for children and families, as demonstrated by work highlighting these issues and their impact on young children. This year FPG researcher **Ximena Franco, PhD**, co-authored a research brief, "The Science is Clear: Separating Families has Long-term Damaging Psychological and Health Consequences for Children, Families, and Communities," with the Society for Research in Child Development's (SRCD) Latino Caucus. The brief points to evidence of the harm caused by family separations and provides a framework for understanding the far-reaching impact of zero-tolerance

immigration policies and practices targeting families at the southern U.S. border.

Doré LaForett, PhD, an FPG researcher who studies young children's academic and social emotional development, was a signatory on a letter from Governor Roy Cooper's N.C. Early Childhood Advisory Council (NCECAC), calling on the North Carolina General Assembly to expand North Carolina's Medicaid program. The letter explains how Medicaid expansion could increase access to affordable health care for the children who need it most. LaForett was named to the council, which focuses on high-quality early childhood programs, in 2018.



Letter from the Director

Supporters, donors, and friends:

As I enter my second year as director of Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, I am deeply grateful for the hard work of so many who helped us embark on the roadmap for FPG's future — our new strategic plan. I want to share with you the resulting strategy statements that will shape and guide our work as we build on FPG's legacy as one of the nation's foremost multidisciplinary centers devoted to the study of children from infancy to adolescence.

- **Our Mission:** Transforming children's lives through innovation in research, practice, and policy
- **Our Vision:** To be a hub of excellence for understanding and impacting child development
- **Our Values:** Relationships; Rigor; and Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity

The strategic planning process helped us organize our work into four divisions — Research & Evaluation, Technical Assistance, Implementation, and Policy — which will allow us to achieve the greatest efficiency and impact. In this report, you'll find researchers, practitioners, and programs that embody this framework through culturally relevant implementation of best practices, technical assistance that removes barriers to success, findings that drive policy, and people who use curiosity and wisdom to create a more equitable world so that all children can become engaged and impassioned members of society.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we are delighted that UNC's developmental science community has united under the Institute. We are focusing on the complex factors that impact child development — those that contribute to resilience and those that exacerbate risk. We are recommitting ourselves to strengthening and accelerating the translation of research knowledge to evidence-based practices and policies. And we are building our capacity to use novel technologies to address critical issues of childhood adversity.

Our plan is ambitious. We need partners as we build toward a future where every child has equal opportunity for health, safety, and happiness. We ask you to join us as we work with intention to develop even more dynamic programs and initiatives that improve the lives of children and adolescents in our state, nation, and beyond.

My warmest regards,



Aysenil Belger, PhD

*Director, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute
Professor, Department of Psychiatry*



Research and
Evaluation



Technical
Assistance



Implementation



Policy

Extending STEM to all children

Young children have a natural capacity to engage with activities in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and the positive benefits for these growing minds are limitless. But in some settings, children with disabilities are excluded from engaging in the brain-building processes these activities promote because educators don't have the resources they need to support every child. Not only do these children miss opportunities for social growth and brain development, but they also miss out on the joy of discovery and curiosity their young minds crave. FPG, in partnership with

the University of Denver, received a \$7.25 million grant to develop and enhance knowledge on engagement in STEM opportunities and implement high-quality technical assistance and professional development to increase the inclusion of young children with disabilities in STEM activities. The **STEM Innovation for Inclusion in Early Education (STEMIE) Center** emphasizes the importance of inclusion in early childhood and works within existing frameworks to build a model that educators can use to implement STEM activities and from which children of all abilities can benefit.

"In later years, children with disabilities are often not enrolled in STEM classes, so if we continue to deny young children the opportunity to participate in STEM activities, the gap will continue to widen."

– Megan Vinh, PhD, Advanced Technical Assistance Specialist



Sustained attention in infancy provides a foundation for self-regulation for children in poverty.

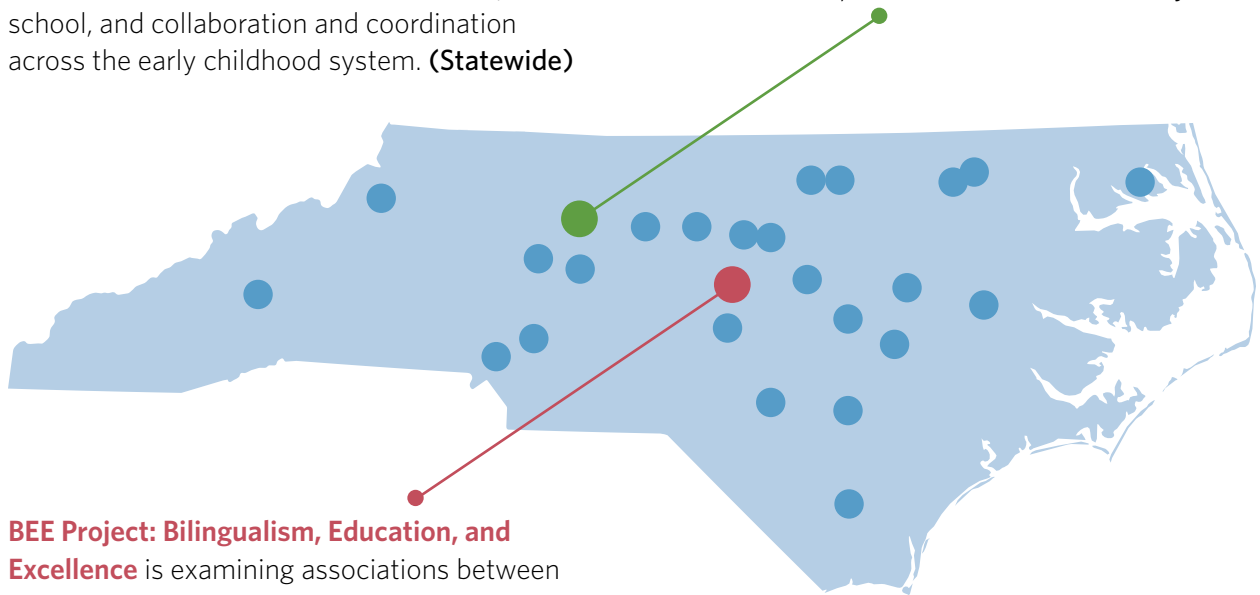
The effects of early-life socioeconomic adversity on the ability to self-regulate emotion in early childhood can be linked to sustained attention in infancy. Using data from the Family Life Project, a longitudinal study of families living in rural low-income communities, researchers found that infant attention skills mediate the links between poverty-related risks and multiple aspects of self-regulation integral for a successful transition to school. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, May 2019

Supporting communities across North Carolina

FPG is engaged in each of North Carolina's 100 counties through a variety of projects related to research and evaluation, technical assistance, and implementation. Last year this work included 7 statewide projects and 18 projects in individual counties (indicated on the map below). Our work within the state focuses on improving child and family well-being of North Carolina's citizens, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Findings from the **Statewide Birth-5 Needs Assessment** will be used to inform the N.C. Division of Child Development and Early Education in developing a strategic plan to strengthen the state's early childhood system. The project gathered information about data needs, quality and availability of early childhood education services, availability and usefulness of information for families, transitions to public school, and collaboration and coordination across the early childhood system. **(Statewide)**

Evaluation of Get Ready Guilford Initiative engages funders and implementing partners to conduct a developmental evaluation of an early childhood collective impact project. Activities include gathering information on the organizations, relationships, practices, roles, and competencies involved in the systems work and ensuring results are used to support learning and continuous improvement. **(Guilford County)**



BEE Project: Bilingualism, Education, and Excellence is examining associations between language of instruction, student engagement, academic-self-concept, approaches to learning, student-teacher relationships, and gains in academic outcomes for students attending dual language educational settings. **(Chatham and Orange counties)**

North Carolina Early Learning Network provides the infrastructure to implement statewide support for systematic training and coaching on evidence-based instructional practices for staff in North Carolina's preschool programs — including early childhood special education, Head Start, Title I, and NC Pre-K programs. **(Statewide)**

Partnerships boost local programs

United Nations ranks the **Triple P—Positive Parenting Program** as the No. 1 parenting program in the world. Triple P has helped more than six million children through programs that help parents raise confident, healthy children. To maximize Triple P's positive outcomes, implementation specialists at FPG are working to develop the most effective ways to implement Triple P in North Carolina's communities. From a two-year rigorous evaluation, FPG came away with several essential factors for a successful scale-up. One was developing broad partnerships. Developing and sustaining local partners to invest in the implementation of Triple P significantly benefits parents and children and assists policymakers and stakeholders in ensuring this best-practice program helps to build safe and healthy families. With ongoing funding from The Duke Endowment, FPG will continue to support the scale-up of Triple P across the entire state.

“Triple P brings evidence-based strategies for effective parenting. FPG brings cutting-edge implementation and scaling science to help make it work.”

– Will Aldridge, PhD, Advanced Implementation Specialist



Betsy Ayankoya,
MEd, associate

director of FPG's
Early Childhood
Technical

Assistance Center,
has been named
the Institute's

first-ever equity,
diversity, and inclusion officer. Building
on the efforts of the Institute's
longstanding RACE Committee,
Ayankoya is working to fully integrate
these values into all FPG's programs for
optimized child development practices
and policies.



Researchers create free briefs on self- regulation in children

What should self-regulation look like at age 3? What about at 8? FPG's **Desiree Murray** and Duke Center for Child and Family Policy's Katie Rosanbalm are lead authors on a series of six free briefs on self-regulation for the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Each snapshot provides a review of key concepts, a listing of the skills developing in that phase, an image of how self-regulation should look in that phase, a review of lessons learned about interventions, and more.





A recent study showed that when children attending rural, state-funded Pre-K participated in sound-focused instructional activities in small groups, they had higher literacy gains. In addition, children who experienced a higher frequency of language exchanges with a teacher had higher language gains. **Focused professional development for early childhood teachers may be key to helping enhance children's language and literacy skills.** *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Nov. 2018



Eliminating barriers to best practices

When it comes to best-practice interventions for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), teachers, parents, and other practitioners should not have to guess what works best. And, beyond knowledge, parents and educators need know-how. The **Autism Focused Intervention Resources and Modules (AFIRM)** project has taken 27 evidence-based intervention practices identified by the National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorder and translated them into free online learning modules to enhance learning and promote positive developmental outcomes. Implementation checklists, planning guides, and family support packages are just some of the free resources AFIRM offers to lift the burden off schools and parents through expertise and evidence-based support. In just five years, AFIRM's modules have shown a remarkable reach, garnering nearly 9 million page views from users all over the world.

AFIRM module reach

80,000 
users

 **170**
countries

9 mil.  views

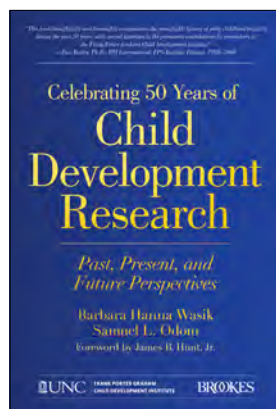
 **113,000**
certificates earned

"I am absolutely blown away by the high-quality content and resources of the AFIRM modules. I look forward to starting the next one."

— Special education teacher from New Zealand



Celebrating 50 Years of Child Development Research, edited by **Barbara Wasik** and **Sam Odom**, commemorates FPG's 50th anniversary symposium and shares lessons learned from a half-century of child development research. More than a dozen high-profile contributors examine the three themes of the anniversary symposium: early care and education, diversity, and children with disabilities and their families. A celebration of progress and a compelling call to action, this volume will help shape the future of the early childhood field. Learn more at go.unc.edu/brookes.



Children who attend the state Pre-K program in North Carolina perform significantly better on some language and literacy skills compared with children who do not participate. A small-scale, randomized controlled trial study of the N.C. Pre-K Program found positive effects on students' language and literacy skills, as well as on literacy and math skills for Spanish-speaking dual-language learners. **All children in North Carolina would benefit from access to Pre-K programs.** *NC Pre-K Program Evaluation Project, Feb. 2019*

2019 Gallagher Award

When it comes to early screening for autism spectrum disorder (ASD), language may lead the way. Research shows that children with ASD are more likely than those without ASD to show an atypical language profile (i.e., better expressive language skills than receptive language skills). Jonet Artis, MEd, a doctoral candidate in UNC-Chapel Hill's Division of Speech and Hearing Sciences, believes predictors may be present as early as 12 months. This novel concept earned Artis the **James J. Gallagher Dissertation Award**, which provides funding for work that reflects Dr. Gallagher's legacy of advancing policy and practice that supports children and families.

"Like Dr. Gallagher, I hope my work will have a lasting impact on putting policy into practice."



Promoting positive teacher-student relationships is vital in influencing educational success.

A recent study showed kindergarten and first-grade students with whom teachers had reported conflictual relationships had lower literacy achievement—even if they weren't struggling readers. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, Jan. 2019

Congratulations to our award winners



Abecedarian Award

Jessica Dykstra Steinbrenner



Thelma Harms
Early Childhood
Education Award

Desiree Murray



James J. Gallagher
Dissertation Award

Jonet Artis



Thelma Harms
Early Childhood
Education Award

Tracey West



Joanne Erwich Roberts
Early Career Award

Nancy Quick

Integrating equity into practice

Practitioners use implementation science to properly integrate evidence-based practices into care settings, but when it comes to meeting the needs of at-risk children and their families, one size does not fit all. FPG's second annual **Summer Institute on Implementation Science**, led by Allison Metz, PhD, focused on incorporating methods of inclusion, access, and equity in implementation science to produce more equitable outcomes. At this year's Summer Institute, 145 implementation researchers and participants from social

work and public health backgrounds learned tools and methods for integrating equity and inclusion into practice. Adapting well-known and effective implementation practices to the social and cultural needs of the community is vital to realizing the intended benefits of the science that researchers know changes lives. With a range of presentations focused on this topic, the Summer Institute paved the way for deeper conversations on how to reach at-risk children in under-resourced, under-supported communities.



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2018-2019 snapshot

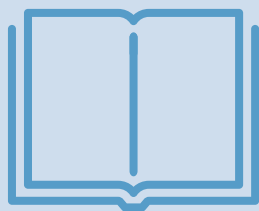


61 funded projects



260 researchers,
implementation and
technical assistance
specialists, staff, and students

75
publications



\$28,342,256
annual expenditures