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# early developments

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FRANK PORTER GRAHAM  
CHILD DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Public Policy  
& Evaluation

# news

## Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center Builds on Prior FPG Successes

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has funded FPG's new Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. The new ECTA Center builds on the foundation of several previous OSEP-funded TA centers at FPG, which were designed to improve service systems and assist states in scaling up and sustaining effective services and research-based interventions for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities and their families.

The new ECTA Center capitalizes on the success and expertise of FPG's National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC), the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI), and the Early Childhood Outcomes Center (ECO)—as well as on the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute's Center for Early Literacy Learning (CELL).

The ECTA Center's work will include:

- Working with partner states to develop a service system framework for high-quality, effective, and efficient early childhood and early intervention service systems. The components and quality indicators within the service system framework will be defined to support the implementation of effective practices at the local level.
- Producing guidance materials for state and local programs that identify the essential features and implementation processes critical to implementing, scaling up, and sustaining effective services and interventions.
- Partnering with the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children, to revise the research-based, field-validated DEC Recommended Practices.
- Providing general/informational technical assistance, specific targeted assistance, and intensive assistance to states and local programs.

<http://ectacenter.org>



## Renée Boothroyd Featured in New SAMHSA Videos

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Collaborative for the Application of Prevention Technologies (CAPT) has released two new videos on the importance of high quality training and technical assistance and the qualities of an effective training system. FPG Senior Implementation Specialist Dr. Renée Boothroyd helped to develop the videos, and she provides an implementation science perspective for the recorded conversations. SAMHSA's CAPT is a national substance abuse prevention training and technical assistance system dedicated to strengthening prevention systems and the nation's behavioral health workforce.

<http://captus.samhsa.gov/prevention-practice/strategic-prevention-framework/build-capacity>

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# Public Policy & Evaluation



## Introduction

Evaluating programs and practices is challenging and requires a unique set of skills. Evaluators must have strong design and analytic skills; understand the policy context; and be able to communicate the evaluation and its findings in a simple, straightforward manner. They must maintain neutrality and curiosity in approaching evaluation questions.

The evaluation data are not always what policymakers want. As described in the article in this issue about FPG's work with Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning, data from a statewide evaluation of child care suggested that the quality of infant/toddler care in Georgia was low. Yet, that's the role of evaluation: to help learn what is and isn't working. In the current economic environment, objective, reliable evaluation data are especially critical to the debates—across both sides of the aisle—about early childhood policy and programs.

As evident in the articles in this issue, FPG has been fortunate to conduct evaluations and policy-relevant studies in North Carolina and other states across the country to address pressing issues in early childhood. This is part of our long history of producing reliable data that decision makers apply to policy questions. The articles in this issue provide a glimpse of our recent work in this area.

**Kelly Maxwell**  
Associate Director, FPG



# Strengthening Services for Georgia's Young Children

President Obama has refocused national attention on pre-k and Georgia's early care and education system, and the state's leaders in the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning have continued their focus on quality in pre-k and beyond through an evaluation partnership with FPG.



Georgia's Pre-K Program took center stage earlier this year when President Obama used his State of the Union Address to issue a call for universal access to all statewide pre-kindergarten programs. "I propose working with states to make high-quality preschool available to every single child in America," said the President. "That's something we should be able to do." The President then praised Georgia's universal pre-kindergarten program.

Six years ago, early education policymakers in Georgia were turning to independent research and expertise in order to improve quality across the range of early care and education settings. Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) approached FPG for an evaluation of Georgia's child care and early education programs. DECAL is Georgia's early education department that oversees Georgia's Pre-K Program, child care and family day care home licensing, federal subsidy and quality funds, and the state's child and adult care food program.

"We had just developed a comprehensive framework of critical quality components across pre-k, child care, and family child care," says Bentley Ponder, DECAL's Research and Evaluation Director. "We needed expertise, though, in determining the best mechanisms for measuring and examining quality statewide. We turned to FPG because of their excellent reputation and their experience in working with individual states in early childhood evaluation."

FPG agreed to the project, and thus began a cross-state effort between re-



Photo courtesy DECAL

searchers and policymakers that has evolved and adapted over the years.

The collaboration first brought findings about the state's programs that were mixed. In 2008 and 2009, FPG Senior Scientist and Associate Director Kelly Maxwell led an FPG evaluation team that conducted a statewide study of randomly selected licensed child care centers, Georgia's Pre-K Program, and licensed family child care homes. In all, FPG collected data on the observed quality and characteristics of

um level in both centers and schools. In addition, FPG's team reported that the quality of emotional support and classroom organization was generally high but the quality of instructional support was lower. This suggested that while Georgia's Pre-K Program classes were commonly warm places that encouraged students to be interested and engaged in learning, teachers were not likely offering many activities that supported children's thinking skills and were probably not engaging children

"We needed expertise in determining the best mechanisms for measuring and examining quality statewide. We turned to FPG because of their excellent reputation and their experience in working with individual states in early childhood evaluation."

—Bentley Ponder, Director of DECAL's Research and Evaluation

328 sites. FPG researchers reported some positive findings to DECAL, but the evaluation team also found room for quality improvement.

Global classroom quality in Georgia's Pre-K Program was at the medi-

in enough of the complex discussions that support children's thinking skills.

Outside Georgia's Pre-K Program, the picture was bleaker. Thirty-five percent (35%) of preschool classrooms were rated low-quality, as were 67% of

infant/toddler classrooms. In addition, about three-quarters (77%) of the family child care programs fell into the low-quality range.

Despite the findings, Georgia's leadership never flinched. Says Ponder, "The findings underscored the need for improving quality to the state's youngest learners. Our top leadership, then and now, saw the findings as a catalyst for moving the state forward."

"We appreciate our partnership with Georgia, because we have seen how they use the data to guide their decisions about program and policy improvements," says Maxwell. "The report doesn't just sit on a shelf."

Maxwell's evaluation team provided research-based suggestions for raising the quality of the state's programs. DECAL outlined its plan of attack and set about addressing the issues that FPG's reports had raised. For example, in response to the quality studies,

incorporated a more stringent probation process for pre-k programs that did not meet higher standards of quality; programs that continued to fail to meet those standards would no longer receive funding.

FPG and DECAL have tailored the scale and scope of their evaluations to DECAL's needs. In 2010, when DECAL offered a 6-week pilot Pre-K Summer Transition Program in 60 classes across the state, Ponder called on FPG with a request to support DECAL in conducting the evaluation. With this evaluation model, Georgia's pre-k consultants collected the data on 240 children, including child pre- and post-assessments. At FPG, Maxwell and colleagues helped to train consultants and then analyzed the data and prepared the report.

Overall, results from the 2010 Pre-K Summer Transition Program evaluation have demonstrated that participat-

from 2010. Susan Adams, Assistant Commissioner for Georgia's Pre-K Program, called the summer program "a great opportunity for these young students to continue building their skills and instilling confidence before moving up into kindergarten."

In 2011, DECAL contracted with FPG to conduct an independent evaluation of pre-k professional development offered as part of Georgia's K-12 Race to the Top grant. Based in part on the previous FPG study findings of moderate quality in pre-k programs, DECAL partnered with Teachstone to strengthen their pre-k professional development efforts, using the framework of the *Classroom Observation Assessment Scoring System* to provide a range of CLASS-based interventions for pre-k teachers that vary in intensity. As part of the study, FPG randomly assigns pre-k sites and teachers to participate in one of the DECAL interventions and conducts pre-

and post-classroom visits. Researchers also examine the supports and challenges involved with successful implementation of professional development strategies.

Currently in year two of the three-year effort, the evaluation team is gather-

ing pre- and post-intervention data on the second cohort of pre-k teachers and has followed about 100 cohort one pre-k teachers to determine the longer-term impact of the professional development. At this time, Maxwell's team is finishing its Year 2 data collection and beginning to plan for the final year of evaluation.

FPG is also conducting an independent, statewide evaluation of Georgia's Pre-K Program, examining classroom quality and outcomes for children. By

In joint reports, FPG's scientists and DECAL administrators identified two key components that had supported their work on each evaluation: "Responsibilities were clearly delineated, and a regular form of communication was established and maintained throughout the project."

DECAL created an Infant Toddler Specialist Network to provide support to teachers and providers who care for children up to 3 years of age, and federal stimulus money through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) went to provide mini-grants to programs and scholarship money to teachers seeking additional education.

In Spring 2010, DECAL also revised how Georgia's Pre-K Program would be monitored, incorporating measures that focused more heavily on instructional quality. In addition, DECAL

ing children made significant gains in pre-literacy skills over the course of the program. FPG concluded that the data from the pilot study provided preliminary support for the summer pre-k program, but Maxwell's team also stated that further study was necessary to better understand the effectiveness of the summer program and to help guide policy decisions regarding its expansion. In Summer 2011, DECAL collected similar evaluation data, and FPG analyzed the data and reported findings, which were similar to those





singling out Georgia’s Pre-K Program in his State of the Union Address for universal access, the President made timely mention of a state that had received attention in previous weeks after a team from FPG, led by FPG Senior Scientist Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, had wrapped up its preliminary report for DECAL.

“Children in Georgia’s Pre-K Program exhibited significant growth during their pre-k year across all domains of learning—language and literacy skills, math skills, general knowledge, and behavioral skills,” says Peisner-Feinberg. “For many areas where we had age-standardized measures, this indicated that they progressed at an even faster rate than would be expected for normal developmental growth.”

Peisner-Feinberg also highlights the importance of Georgia’s Pre-K Program to children who are Spanish-speaking dual language learners. “They made gains in both English and Spanish,” she says, “even though the primary language of instruction was English.”

Peisner-Feinberg and colleagues recommended adding bilingual supports to children’s classroom experiences to support their development of skills in both languages and better prepare them

for kindergarten, as well as reducing class size and adult-to-child ratios.

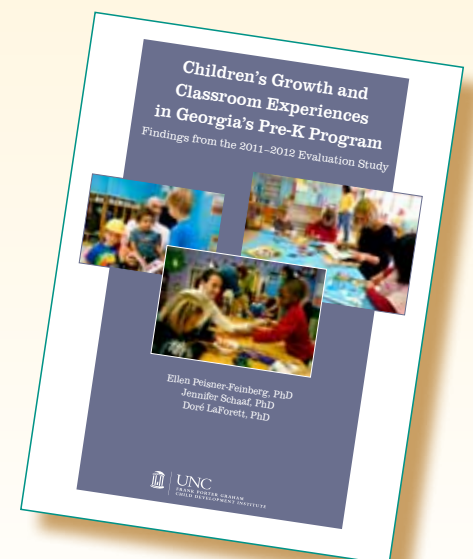
In earlier joint reports, Maxwell, Ponder, and their co-authors identified two key components that have supported FPG’s work with DECAL: “Responsibilities were clearly delineated, and a regular form of communication was established and maintained throughout the project.” Through such openness and well-defined roles—and through mutual adaptability—FPG has been able to tailor and carry out evaluation studies that provide important information to guide DECAL’s efforts to continue strengthening the services it provides to Georgia’s young children. |ed|

To read more about FPG’s ongoing work with DECAL, visit

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/projects/georgia-pre-kindergarten-evaluation>

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/projects/evaluation-georgias-pre-kindergarten-professional-development-initiative>

<http://dec.al.ga.gov/BftS/Research.aspx>



# Early Childhood Programs for At-Risk Children

What Can We Learn from the Educare Model?



Since 2005, an FPG team has been evaluating the Educare model, and findings show that Educare is succeeding in preparing young at-risk children for later academic and school success.

**A**chievement gaps and disparities in school readiness pose ongoing challenges for programs serving young children from low-income, economically distressed environments. The effects of poverty, along with the host of risk factors that tend to occur with poverty, can prevent children from receiving opportunities that would prepare them for school. As a result, at-risk children often have smaller vocabularies, are less likely to know their letters and numbers, and consistently score below their higher-income peers in early reading and math. These early disadvantages create problems that often persist well beyond the grade school years into high school. They may also manifest later in life in the form of social and economic problems such as illiteracy, teen pregnancy, high dropout rates, and unemployment.

Educare, a comprehensive and innovative program for at-risk children from birth to 5, aims to prevent achievement gaps from taking root by promoting school readiness. Educare schools are full-day, year-round Early Head Start/Head Start programs that use collaborative public-private partnerships to promote and implement best practices for children and families. The Educare model is designed to provide quality learning environments that help children arrive at kindergarten healthy and ready to learn, while also helping parents become active partners in their children's learning. On a broader scale, Educare seeks to support effective state policies by serving as a showcase that provides public and private sector leaders with a firsthand view of high-quality, research-based early childhood education, demonstrating the tremendous return that can come from investments in appropriate programs.

### Is the Educare approach working?

Findings show that the Educare model is succeeding in preparing young at-risk children for later academic and school success. Since 2005, an FPG team has led the Educare Learning Network (ELN) Implementation Study, which is evaluating the Educare model. The ELN is a consortium of programs implementing the core features of Educare. Funded by the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the evaluation documents the core features of Educare and assesses how implementation of the model contributes to program quality and influences child and family outcomes.

As of the 2010-11 school year, the study included Educare programs and participants in 12 sites: Central Maine, Chicago, Denver, Kansas City, Miami, Milwaukee, Oklahoma City, Omaha (two sites), Seattle, and Tulsa (two sites). Evaluators measured four factors to examine program implementation and child and family outcomes:

1. implementation of the core features of the Educare model;
2. dosage and intensity of child and family services;
3. child and family status at entry into the program; and
4. child and family progress over time.

Two key domains—school readiness and classroom quality—provide illustrative results.

#### School Readiness

Proficient communication, early literacy, and vocabulary skills consistently predict later academic success. The Educare Learning Network Implementation Study measures vocabulary skills using the *Peabody Picture Vocabulary*



## The Four Ps of Educare

### A Program

Applying systems of data utilization and coaching/embedded professional development to support high-quality teaching practices and intensive family engagement.

### A Place

Creating a recognizable place dedicated to birth-to-5 care and education that sends a strong message about the importance of investing in young children and starting intervention efforts as early as possible.

### A Partnership

Developing community-based public-private partnerships, including school districts, child care funding, Head Start and Early Head Start programs, private funders, and others, to provide high-quality, comprehensive services for young children and their families.

### A Platform

Serving as a platform to educate practitioners and policymakers about investing in early care and education, leverage public and private investment in early childhood, raise standards of quality, and push for policy and systems change.

*Test* (PPVT), a widely used and standardized measure of young children’s vocabulary that is a good indicator for reading success in elementary school. The study administers the PPVT every spring, beginning at age 3.

Evaluation data show that while Educare has clear benefits for all participants, kindergarten-bound children who began the Educare program earlier in life scored better on measures of school readiness, a pattern that holds irrespective of maternal education, race, and teen parent status.

In particular, children who begin Educare earlier have even better vocabulary skills:

1. The vocabulary scores of all English-speaking kindergarten-bound Educare children averaged 95.0, much higher than would be expected of typical children from low-income families, who tend to have vocabularies in the low-average range or below (e.g., a vocabulary score of 85).
2. The subset of children who entered Educare as infants had even higher vocabulary scores (98.2, nearing the national average of 100).

The Educare model also is designed to help children develop the social and emotional skills to become active, engaged, and successful students. Skills such as the capacity to control one’s behavior, get along with peers, and ask for and receive help are critical to school success. The Educare evaluation measures these skills using the *Devereux Early Childhood Assessment* (DECA), a nationally normed assessment that measures self-control, attachment, and initiative in preschool children age 2–5. The DECA is administered in the fall and spring of each year, revealing positive outcomes associated with Educare:

1. 89% of Educare children have social skills rated as meeting or exceeding national averages.
2. Results from the Chicago Educare program, which is the only program to date that has followed children into elementary schools, indicated that Educare graduates are half as likely as other children from low-income communities to demonstrate behavioral problems at the transition to kindergarten.

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### Classroom Quality

A large body of research demonstrates that high-quality classroom environments are associated with enhanced child outcomes in the areas of language, vocabulary, early math, and social skills. To measure classroom quality, the evaluation team uses the *Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised* (ITERS-R) and the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised* (ECERS-R), observational measures widely used by researchers and government agencies to assess the quality of child care and early education settings.

The measures rate quality on a scale of 1 (inadequate) to 7 (excellent). A high score indicates higher quality classroom activities, staff-child interactions, equipment, space, and materials.

Across all sites, the Educare schools participating in the evaluation had high-quality classrooms:

1. 71% of infant-toddler classrooms scored 5 (good quality) or above. Moreover, the average of 5.3 is much higher than observed in a recent national study of other infant-toddler care settings.
2. The Educare sites’ average score of 5.6 for preschool classrooms is well above the range found in other national studies of preschool classroom quality (3.4 to 5.2).

### Impact of the Implementation Study

The Educare Learning Network Implementation Study has been valuable for Educare programs and the ELN, as well as for advancing policy discussion nationwide.

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### Educare Programs

Valuing and using research is part of the Educare philosophy, and the implementation study provides Educare programs and their staff with the information they need to do their best work. They use most of the data for continuous program improvement. Each site has designed a feedback loop to share relevant data with appropriate staff such as teachers, family support specialists, and directors.

“The feedback from the study has been critical in assisting teachers to better understand how to individualize to meet the needs of the children enrolled in the program,” says Gladys Haynes, executive director of the Educare program of Omaha. “Feedback to teachers following the classroom evaluations has provided them with an objective snapshot of their classroom set-up and, more recently, their level of interactions with the children in the classrooms. It has also guided programs in identifying areas of strength, as well as challenges, in maintaining a high-quality program.”

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### The Educare Learning Network

The results of the implementation study are also useful for the ELN leadership. Documentation of the extent to which each program has implemented the Educare model allows the ELN to tailor the technical assistance that it provides to help sites attain their goals. The study is also helping the ELN to determine if Educare is doing what it set out to do and whether it is achieving its expected impact. Over time, the evaluation results will allow the ELN to better understand the progress made by children and families enrolled in Educare programs.

## Across the Nation

Educare schools have played a key role in advancing policy change for young at-risk children in several states. The Educare experience also is helping establish new models for expanding access to quality early childhood programs. The early results of the Educare movement have fueled two specific and related policy initiatives: the state-level Alliance for Early Success, and, at the federal level, The First Five Years Fund, both of which focus on generating new investments in high-quality programs for young at-risk children.

For states and schools considering adoption of the Educare model, the evaluation results can highlight reasonable expectations for what well-implemented programs can achieve. Thus far, the Educare Learning Network Implementation Study's results demonstrate that earlier enrollment in the high-quality learning environment promoted by the Educare model can produce impressive outcomes for young children.

"The FPG research suggests that Educare is a significant way to change the life trajectories of very young children growing up in very disadvantaged circumstances," says Jessie Rasmussen, President of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. "These numbers from a highly respected source constitute a powerful tool to change the understanding among policymakers, business leaders, and others across America about what it really takes to level the academic playing field in the first five years of learning."

"The FPG research suggests that Educare is a significant way to change the life trajectories of very young children growing up in very disadvantaged circumstances."

—Jessie Rasmussen, President, Buffett Early Childhood Fund

## What's Next?

Moving forward, FPG evaluators will continue to gather and analyze multisite data in ways that will provide policymakers, funders, and others with a range of programmatic and outcome information that can help broaden access to quality early childhood programs. The children currently participating in the implementation study, which now includes 18 sites, will be followed longitudinally through their time at Educare. In addition, new sites in diverse locales are entering both the ELN and the study each year. With these future cohorts FPG researchers will determine if new findings replicate the promising results discussed here and will more extensively analyze child, family, classroom, and program characteristics. The FPG team has also begun a randomized controlled trial of the Educare model that could further bolster the case for investing in high-quality early learning programs for young at-risk children. | [ed](#) |

## To Learn More

<http://eln.fpg.unc.edu/>

<http://www.educareschools.org/>

# Core Features of the Educare Model

- Provide full-day, full-year services
- Use research-based strategies, including a commitment to continuous improvement and use of local evaluation partner, and participate in a national, multi-site evaluation
- Implement reflective supervision and practice
- Maintain small class size and high staff/child ratios (infant-toddler—3:8 per classroom; preschool rooms—3:17 per classroom)
- Provide continuity of care, with primary teachers that remain with children for three years, from birth to age 3, and a second team that remains with children from ages 3 to 5
- Offer on-site family support using staff with master's and bachelor's degrees and small caseloads
- Implement an interdisciplinary approach that builds effective partnerships among staff, consultants, and families
- Maintain high staff qualifications, including Master Teachers with advanced degrees in early childhood who supervise three to four classrooms
- Provide enhanced focus on language and literacy
- Provide strong emphasis on social-emotional development
- Provide enhanced focus on problem-solving and numeracy
- Integrate the arts

<http://www.educareschools.org/about/educare-core-features.php>



# The Evaluation of North Carolina's Pre-Kindergarten Program

Building on years of successful partnerships, FPG experts work closely with North Carolina's policymakers to evaluate and improve pre-k.

The achievement gap for at-risk children starts before their school years and is often difficult to reverse. Promoting high-quality learning and development are proven ways to reduce this gap and generate positive outcomes for at-risk children, their communities, and society as a whole.

The documented effectiveness of small-scale programs has helped to prompt the creation of larger programs serving greater numbers of children. Although many states and school districts have implemented such programs, there have been questions about both the impact of such programs as they are scaled up to serve more children and the extent to which program effects can be sustained over time. To help answer these questions, FPG has been working with the state of North Carolina to evaluate the impact and sustainability of NC Pre-K (formerly known as More at Four), the state's program for at-risk 4-year-olds.

North Carolina has been making great strides to promote learning programs for at-risk children, and FPG has helped the state ensure that their early childhood programs are high-quality, effective, and sustainable. FPG researchers had conducted a statewide school readiness study in 2000, highlighting the gap in skills of entering kindergartners from lower-income families compared to children from higher-income families. When NC initiated its pre-k program for at-risk children, they contracted with FPG to conduct the evaluation using similar school readiness measures. Since the program began in 2001, the FPG evaluation team has provided an annual "big-picture" look at the program to examine its effectiveness and to provide data that could be used for program improvement.

NC Pre-K is designed to be a high-quality program that serves young children who are at risk and prepares them for success in school. The NC Pre-K program guidelines provide standards related to staff qualifications, class size, teacher-child ratios, North Carolina child care licensing levels, curriculum, and provision of other program services. Enrollees include children with limited English proficiency, those living in low-income households, and children with chronic health conditions and developmental delays.

The program is community-based, integrated with other local early childhood programs, and administered at the county level. Children in the program may be served in classrooms in the state's public schools, licensed

child care centers, or Head Start programs, and they attend a full school-day, full school-year program that meets high-quality state standards. When it began in 2001, the program enrolled 1,200 children annually. Now, NC Pre-K serves nearly 30,000 children each year.

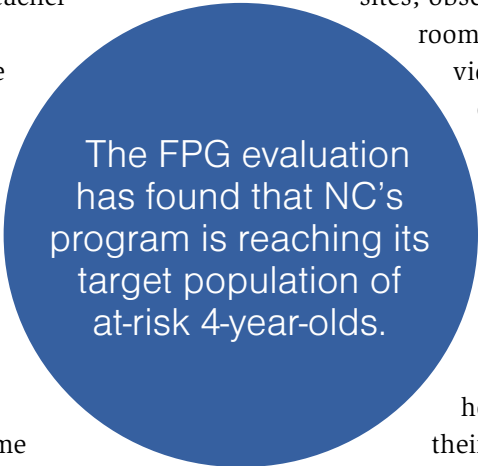
The goals of FPG's evaluations have been to determine: a) whether the overall program is meeting state guidelines, and b) the impact of the program on the children being served. In particular, FPG's team seeks to answer the following questions:

- Who is being served by the program?
- What are the characteristics and quality of the services provided?
- What are the outcomes of children attending the program?
- What factors are associated with better outcomes for children?

To answer these questions, FPG has gathered and evaluated data from a variety of sources: monthly service reports of program characteristics and the children served from all program sites; observations of classroom quality; and individual assessments of

children's growth in language and literacy skills, math skills, general knowledge, and behavioral skills. The evaluation has followed several cohorts of children from their pre-k year through

kindergarten and has even examined children's scores on North Carolina's end-of-grade assessments in third grade both for children who did and did not participate in the pre-k program.



The FPG evaluation has found that NC's program is reaching its target population of at-risk 4-year-olds.

## Findings

### Program Strength

The FPG evaluators have found that the statewide program serves an at-risk and high service priority status population of children each year, as intended.

The evaluation team also found that as the program continued to scale up, it maintained program quality and improved its teacher qualifications:

1. Observations of program quality have indicated that classroom practices have been close to or in the high quality range, with no consistent pattern of decline in quality over time, which is important to examine as programs scale up.
2. The proportion of teachers with a B-K license (or the equivalent) has continued to increase each year, while at the same time, the proportion of teachers with no credential has consistently decreased.

The program has some strong components in place that have been crucial to sustaining quality. These include: maintaining relatively low class sizes and high adult-to-child ratios; requirements for teacher credentials and supports for helping teachers achieve B-K licensure; and, use of an approved curriculum.

Moreover, the program has used the findings of the evaluation to help inform their



quality improvement efforts. For example, when evaluation results showed that pre-k classrooms did a better job of providing literacy-rich environments than offering literacy activities, the program directed professional development activities toward helping teachers in this regard.

### Child Outcomes

FPG's evaluations have found that children enrolled in the statewide pre-k program made substantial gains during pre-kindergarten in language and literacy, math, general knowledge, and social skills. Attendees of the state's program contin-

ued to make gains as kindergartners, and for children with lower English language proficiency, the program had even stronger effects. Although these children may not yet have caught up to the other students, they are growing at an even faster rate, demonstrating the strong impact and benefits of the program for this especially at-risk group.

FPG's data from NC's reading and math assessments at the end of third grade revealed that children from low-income families who had attended the state pre-k program had higher reading and math scores on the end-of-grade tests than similar children who had not attended.

These results suggest that the benefits of the state's pre-k program are still evident four years later. Since the program's inception

12 years ago, it has been fulfilling its mandate

to reach the target population of at-risk 4-year-olds. The results of FPG's evaluations show that a statewide pre-k program can maintain positive effects over time, even while greatly expanding in scale. These sustained outcomes may be a reflection of the quality maintained by NC's program. Having a dozen years of objective, external evaluation data has been beneficial for decision makers. | ed |

### To Learn More

<http://projects.fpg.unc.edu/~mafeval/>

A statewide pre-k program can maintain positive effects over time, even while greatly expanding in scale.

At the end of third grade, children from low-income families who had attended the state pre-k program had higher reading and math scores on the end-of-grade tests than similar children who had not attended.



# The QUINCE Study



## Can On-Site Consultation Significantly Improve Child Care Quality?

A fresh look at important research from the last decade

**A**lthough there are robust efforts across the nation to improve quality through professional development for child care providers—especially through on-site consultation—few have been put to the test of a randomized control trial.

As a result, we know little about the type and content of consultation that might be most effective, whether there are particular characteristics of the family and center-based providers who might benefit from consultation, or the duration and total amount of technical assistance (TA) that would be necessary to create measurable quality improvement.

To address this need, the Child Care Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services funded the Quality Interventions for Early Care and Education (QUINCE) study to compare the Partnerships for Inclusion (PFI) model of on-site consultation to other typical quality enhancement programs for child care providers. The multi-state study was led by FPG and a consortium of researchers at four other universities.

The QUINCE study had three objectives: 1) to test the effectiveness of the PFI consultation model of on-site consultation, as compared to typical, “business as usual” quality enhancement programs delivered by the 24 participating agencies; 2) to investigate the conditions under which PFI might work; and 3) to assess whether children in family child care (FCC) homes or child care center classrooms served by PFI-trained consultants had better outcomes than those in programs that received the typical consultation.

### Why Partnerships for Inclusion?

The Child Care Bureau wanted to study a “proven” quality improvement model, and the PFI consultation model had shown promising results. The PFI on-site consultation model is based on quality assessment tools developed at FPG (*Environment Rating Scales*) and a relationship-based approach to consultant-consultee interactions.

PFI is a collaborative model that follows predictable stages and includes the consultee (both classroom teachers and FCC providers) in all aspects of the consultation process. In the QUINCE study, the PFI model enabled participants to learn the standards for high-quality care and work collaboratively with a consultant to assess their own environments, as well as to set their own goals for improvement based on the assessment tool used and their identified strengths, needs, and resources. From those goals, they developed and implemented an action plan. Once that plan was complete, they evaluated the consultation process and the effectiveness of the action plan in making the desired changes. This approach had previously been shown to en-

hance classroom quality significantly when delivered by highly trained university-based consultants and also when delivered by North Carolina community-based child care consultants trained by the PFI team. In the QUINCE study, typical consultants from 24 diverse child care quality agencies across the country participated.

### The Study

Community resource and referral agencies are typically the providers of training to family and/or center-based child care providers. QUINCE recruited 24 agencies in California, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, and North Carolina to participate. The agencies allowed their consultant staff to participate in the study, including agreement to randomly assign participating consultants to either the treatment (PFI) or control condition. (The control condition was the typical consultation approach used by the 24 participating agencies, thus every participant in the study, both PFI and control, received some type of services.) Treatment consultants received three days of training on the quality assessment tools and two days of training on the PFI model of consultation. The study began in September 2004 and continued until September 2007. Random assignment was used at two levels: 101 consultants were assigned to PFI or control groups, and 108 child care classrooms and 263 FCC homes were randomly assigned to PFI or control consultants. Both classroom teachers and FCC providers were assessed using questionnaires and observations before and after the PFI or control intervention and six months later. In the year after the intervention, 710 children in these classrooms and FCC homes were assessed at two time points with measures of cognitive, language, and social-emotional development.

### Findings: Quality and Child Outcomes

The QUINCE researchers predicted that classroom teachers and FCC providers who received services provided by a PFI-trained consultant would: a) provide higher quality care than those who received typical quality enhancements, b) provide higher quality care than they provided before receiving the services, and c) continue to provide higher quality care six months after the PFI-trained consultant services ended. The researchers also hypothesized that children who were cared for by people who received services from a PFI-trained consultant would have better outcomes than children who were cared for by people who received typical consultation services, and that outcomes for children in higher quality care, regardless of the type of intervention their provider received, would be higher than those in lower quality care.



The QUINCE data provided strong evidence to support the many other studies that show a relationship between the quality of the learning environment and children's outcomes.

For family child care providers, results indicated that the PFI group made significant gains in quality from the beginning to end of consultation and they were significantly higher than the control group, which made no gains. The magnitude of the results was moderate, and the gains they made during the intervention were maintained at six months after it ended.

Among classroom teachers, both PFI and control groups improved over time on three of the four measures of quality: teaching and interactions, provisions for learning, and literacy/numeracy. Quality gains were slight during intervention and greater over the six months post-intervention, but the rate of change for the PFI and control groups did not significantly differ. In the PFI group, individuals with more experience made more significant gains in quality over time than those with less experience.

The QUINCE data also provided strong evidence to support the many other studies that show a relationship between the quality of the learning environment and children's outcomes in both FCC homes and center classrooms. After accounting for child characteristics, children in higher quality classrooms and FCC homes scored higher on the language, school

readiness, and social competence measures, and lower on conduct problems and anxiety/depression. The researchers found that children in PFI classrooms showed significantly greater improvement during the year on the language measure than children in control classrooms. This effect was not found among children in FCC.

Both control and PFI consultants reported on the frequency and duration of their phone and on-site contacts with providers. The control consultants reported on the general content of their visits, and PFI consultants reported more extensively. A fidelity index was created for PFI that reflected the extent that the consultants implemented the model's key components and the quality of service delivery, although quality was difficult to assess. Fidelity scores ranged widely, with only 8% of PFI consultants rated at a level that model developers consider to be "high-level" implementation and less than half implementing at an "average" level or above. PFI consultants generally made the expected number of visits and created opportunities for their consultees to make decisions, but making regular visits (i.e., twice per month) was challenging, as was tying action plan goals to quality assessment results.



The QUINCE study offered evidence that on-site consultation can significantly improve child care quality.

### Using On-Site Consultation and Tools to Improve Quality

The QUINCE study offered evidence that on-site consultation can significantly improve child care quality. Using quality assessment tools at or near the beginning of consultation can provide an objective and concrete basis for entering into a helpful relationship with a classroom teacher or FCC provider.

Given the focus on quality and the national movement toward quality rating and improvement systems, the QUINCE researchers recommended additional studies comparing methods of enhancing child care quality. Research on the issue of fidelity also helps agencies and supervisors know how to better train, support, and measure the fidelity with which consultants deliver their services.

The QUINCE researchers hypothesized that child care providers and children would both see positive outcomes as a result of the PFI intervention, and they did. Consul-

tation is an increasingly utilized method of quality improvement in both early childhood classrooms and family child care homes. Agencies are beginning to understand that it is important to use proven consultation models, and this study offered new data and insights about the PFI model's effectiveness. | ed |

### To Learn More

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/projects/QUINCE>

- Palsha, S. A., & Wesley, P. W. (1998). Improving quality in early childhood environments through on-site consultation. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 18*(4), 243-253.
- Wesley, P. W. (1994). Providing on-site consultation to promote quality in integrated child care programs. *Journal of Early Intervention, 18*(4), 391-402.
- Wesley, P. W., Bryant, D., Fenson, C., Hughes, K., Tout, K., & Susman-Stillman, A. (2010). Treatment fidelity challenges in a five-state consultation study. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 20*(3), 209-227.

# news

## FPG Hosts the 13TH Annual National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute

**M**ore than 400 people from multiple disciplines, agencies, and settings, including teachers and families, attended the 13TH Inclusion Institute. The Institute has become the annual premier event for people from all early childhood sectors to come together to learn, share, and problem-solve about inclusion for young children with disabilities. This year's Institute included a keynote address from Micah Fialka-Feldman, an adult with an intellectual disability, who is now attending college and has fought for inclusion his entire life.



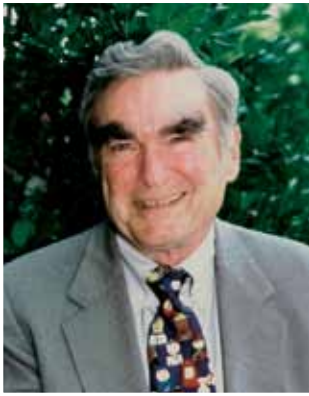
2013 participants spent May 13-15 at UNC's Friday Center in workshops, presentations, discussions, and action-planning

sessions geared toward changes they plan to make to improve the inclusive programs and services available to young children with disabilities from birth to 5 years of age. Internationally known experts and researchers made presentations on key topics, such as Family Partnerships, Autism, Early Childhood Systems Building, Interactional and Instructional Practices, and Professional Development.

"The thing that impressed me most about the conference was that you took the time and money to have the 'actual' authors or researchers from the projects presenting. It was not someone talking about someone else's work. Also, that great learning and collaboration was modeled by your presenters. There is nothing more powerful than a great model. In one session the presenters were presenting and leading us through discovery and discussion, and in the very next session they were sitting in the chairs next to participants, modeling discovery, connections, and continual growth. This is by far the most impressive conference I have been to. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to providing evidence-based practices in such a meaningful way."

—a participant in the  
2012 Inclusion Institute

<http://inclusioninstitute.fpg.unc.edu>



## James J. Gallagher Wins Old North State Award

North Carolina's Office of the Governor has awarded The Old North State Award to Dr. James J. Gallagher, Senior Scientist Emeritus at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute. Former State Senator Howard Lee presented the award.

The Office of the Governor issues The Old North State Award to individuals who have a proven record of exemplary service and commitment to North Carolina and to their respective communities. Gallagher has served FPG since 1970, including a term as director, and is an internationally recognized expert on early childhood development.

"In the forty years I have been at FPG it has been my privilege to work with so many dedicated leaders, teachers, and researchers striving to make a positive future for North Carolina's children, and, in fact, children everywhere," says Gallagher. "I consider this award to be a reflection of those efforts."

<http://fpg.unc.edu/news/james-j-gallagher-wins-ncs-old-north-state-award>

## Registration Opens for National Health Equity Research Webcast

The 19TH National Health Equity Research Webcast is Tuesday, June 4, 2013, from 1:30-4:00 PM EST. This year's topic is "Early Childhood Development: Investing in Our Children and Our Future," presented by the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health Minority Health Project and UNC Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, in association with FPG.

<http://www.minority.unc.edu/institute/2013/>



## FPG Releases Annual Report

FPG has released its Annual Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2012. The report describes activities from the past year and offers a look at activities and new projects that are unfolding. FPG's investigators have continued in their roles as national and international leaders in child development, early childhood education, special education, professional development, technical assistance, and implementation science. The report offers a testament to our founding vision and a challenge to us for continuing our efforts to improve the lives of young children and their families within our state, across the nation, and around the world.

[http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/default/files/about\\_fpg/FPG\\_20112012\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/default/files/about_fpg/FPG_20112012_Annual_Report.pdf)

## Targeted Reading Intervention Identified as Promising Practice



**T**argeted Reading Intervention (TRI) has been identified as a promising practice by two national organizations through rigorous examination of their research findings. The Annie E. Casey Foundation has developed Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development, a searchable database that includes programs that meet the highest scientific standard of evidence for promoting youth behavior, education,

emotional well-being, health, and positive relationships. The Promising Practices Network (PPN) website also offers credible, research-based information on what works to improve the lives of children and families. Sometimes referred to as a “best practices” site or a “model program” site, PPN provides summaries of effective programs in the Programs that Work section that have met high standards for scientific credibility, objectivity, and clarity.

TRI is a dual-level professional development intervention designed for both at-risk K-1 students and their classroom teachers. Coaches with reading expertise provide one-on-one, ongoing support to classroom teachers in multiple states via webcam. FPG Fellow Dr. Lynne Vernon-Feagans is the Principal Investigator.

<http://www.targetedreadingintervention.org/>

## National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) Celebrates 10-Year Anniversary

“**N**IRN began with the enthusiastic efforts of a few individuals and the hope of stimulating research, evaluation, policy, and practice related to implementation,” say FPG Senior Scientists and National Implementation Research Network Co-Directors Dean Fixsen and Karen Blase. “Ten years later the fledgling national network is now active in an engaged global community.”

NIRN has assembled a team of 13 professionals at FPG, and projects and partnerships range from developing the implementation infrastructure for health and early childhood initiatives in underserved areas to developing scale-up strategies for evidence-based educational practices, to testing measures of implementation capacity.

In addition, NIRN brought global partners together to host the first Global Implementation Conference in 2011, with 800 participants from around the world representing program developers, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners interested in science, practice, and policies related to implementation. This year’s Global Implementation Conference is August 19-21 in Washington, DC.

<http://fpg.unc.edu/news/registration-and-proposal-submission-now-open-2013-global-implementation-conference>

<http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/>

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early developments

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