



New Stories  
from the  
Frank Porter Graham  
Child Development Institute

The 2012–2013 Fiscal Year in Review

# FPG at a Glance

*Advancing knowledge.  
Enhancing lives.*

**FY 2012–2013 Projects:** 105

## **Funding**

57% Federal Grants

18% Private Grants

11% State Grants

9% Fees, sales, royalties, other

5% State & University  
Appropriations

## **Sources of Federal Funding**

Department of Education (59%)

National Institutes of Health (29%)

Administration for Children &  
Families (10%)

Other (2%)

## **People**

246 Staff

67 Investigators

25 Students, Graduate Assistants,  
and Post-Docs

## **Affiliated Disciplines**

Anthropology, Audiology,  
Biostatistics, Education, Linguistics,  
Maternal and Child Health, Nursing,  
Occupational Science, Pediatrics,  
Psychiatry, Psychology, Public  
Health, Public Policy, Social Work,  
Speech and Hearing Sciences

# From the Director

Dear Colleagues,

UNC's Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute is a coat of many colors. From a distance, the reds and blues and magentas blend into a fine shade of purple, but only by walking closer and observing the many features of the fabric does one get a keen sense of the garment. In this annual review, we will be telling the stories of our multifaceted work, the fabric of FPG, and describe how you can learn more about it.

Our very talented editorial team (Pam Winton, Dave Shaw, Stephanie Ridley, Jay Hargrove, Gina Harrison, and Don Trull) have recorded stories of projects, initiatives, and accomplishments of our group. Guided by our motto, "Advancing knowledge, enhancing lives," the stories convey a focus on early childhood development and education, educational programs to improve practice, program evaluation and social policy. Our work stretches from the beginning of life for young children and their families, through high school for some youth with disabilities, to health concerns for adults with disabilities. It directly addresses issues of race, ethnicity, and cultural diversity. And, we extend this work to practices ("... enhancing lives") through professional development, technical assistance, and implementation science.

So, we invite you to take a peek at our stories. The 2012–13 fiscal year has been a productive one for FPG, although not without loss. After a 40-year history, our child care center closed this year. I want to acknowledge all the great work our teachers have contributed this past year and in the many past years. At FPG, we have helped raise several generations of young North Carolina citizens, and the teachers and staff were at the heart of that contribution to the community and to the state. Even as it closes, we are proud of the legacy the Child Care Center established.

The broader institute has continued to expand, and work proceeds at a brisk pace. You will find information about our more traditional academic productivity as well as funding for new projects. We are proud of our award-winners, like former FPG director Dr. James Gallagher's Old North State Award. Our FPG investigators continue to conduct their work at the local, national, and international levels. As we move forward into the new fiscal year, we hope that our stories will allow you to see us as even more than a purple image on a background of Carolina Blue, and appreciate the contribution we have made to citizens of North Carolina, the country, and the world.

Best Regards,

Samuel L. Odom, Director

Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute



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# Introduction

## **The Promise of Comprehensive Early Childhood Education and the Ongoing Legacy of FPG's Seminal Abecedarian Project**

When a panel of experts gathered in June for UNC's 19th National Health Equity Research Webcast and emphasized the role of comprehensive early childhood education programs in combatting the effects of poverty, FPG's groundbreaking Abecedarian Project also took center stage.

"Early Childhood Development: Investing in Our Children and Our Future" brought together a live audience and viewers from around the world to participate in a debate that has captured national attention in the U.S. since President Obama made his February call for universal preschool access.

"Poverty detracts from resources used to maintain health, while poor health detracts from the educational and employment paths to income mobility," said FPG director Samuel L. Odom, quoting a national report during his welcome address. "It's a Catch-22."

Children raised in poverty have poorer academic achievement outcomes on average than other children. They are much less likely to attend college, more likely to become a teen parent, more likely to smoke, more likely to be unemployed, and they also may face other adverse outcomes. These outcomes burden taxpayers and, of course, contribute toward unmet personal potential.

Odom identified developmental differences between children born into poverty and those not, a gap that appears at nine months and widens across early childhood. He also cited FPG's decades-long Abecedarian Study, which has shown that comprehensive early education and care for at-risk children can have a positive, long-lasting effect on the course of development.

At its inception in the early 1970s, the Abecedarian Early Childhood Intervention Project represented a revolutionary approach in early childhood education. It differed from other childhood interventions because it began in early infancy and exposed children to a high-quality child care set-

ting for five years, instead of the shorter durations typical of other projects.

The original study examined the extent to which intensive early childhood education could overcome the odds of developmental delays and academic failure for children born into low-income families. Researchers recruited at-risk children from low-income families in North Carolina. Although ethnicity was not a selection criteria, most children were African American.

In addition to receiving their health care on-site from staff pediatricians, children benefited from stable and predictable early childhood experiences. Beginning in early infancy, children attended a high-quality child care center for five years, five days a week, year round, and they participated in an innovative curriculum until they entered public school kindergarten at age 5. Their early childhood educational activities were designed to develop age-appropriate language, cognitive, socio-emotional, and gross and fine motor skills across the infant, toddler, and pre-school years.

Each child had an individualized prescription of educational activities, or “games,” that were incorporated into his or her day. Infant games were age appropriate adult-child interactions that included talking to the child, showing pictures or toys, and offering infants a chance to react to their environment. Sometimes researchers integrated traditional activities, such as peek-a-boo, and they purposely kept the games short. As children aged, the games became more conceptual and skill-based. Activities gave particular emphasis to language.



The study then followed the children participating in the project well into adulthood, assessing them at age 5, 8, 12, 15, 21, and 30. Through age 15, I.Q. scores for the children who received the birth-to-age-5 Abecedarian intervention were higher than those of the randomly assigned control group. The treated children also scored higher on achievement tests in math and reading during elementary and secondary school years. In addition, they had lower levels of grade retention and placements in special education classes—a

long-term cost savings to their families and schools.

At age 21, the treated group had maintained statistically significant advantages both in intellectual test performance and in scores on academic tests of reading and mathematics, and the treated group also had attained more years of education. In addition, recipients of

the Abecedarian curriculum were more likely to attend a 4-year college or university, more likely either to be in school or to have a skilled job, or both. They also were less likely to be teen parents, less likely to smoke marijuana, and less likely to

report depressive symptoms, when compared to individuals in the control group. At age 30, the treated group was more likely to hold a bachelor's degree, hold a job, and delay parenthood, among other positive differences from their peers.

FPG's Abecedarian Project also positively affected the teenage mothers who had children in the study. By the time their children were 4½, these mothers were more likely to have finished high school and undergone post-secondary training. They were more likely to be self-supporting and less likely to have more children. Additional training, employment experience, and

education led to increased earnings and decreased reliance on social assistance.

Not only can the personal effects of comprehensive and stimulating early education be far-reaching, but long-term savings to taxpayers also can be considerable. Independent economists calculated cost-benefit ratios for the Abecedarian Project, determining that for every dollar spent on the project, taxpayers saved \$2.50 as a result of higher incomes, less need for educational and government services, and reduced health care costs.

“This study has shown the cost-effectiveness of providing early developmental care and health care,” concluded Odom during his welcome address to the live audience at UNC and to global viewers of the webcast.

Other experts in attendance agreed. “You cannot separate poverty from outcomes for children and their families,” said Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, director of the national Office of Head Start, which serves over one million 3–5 year-olds from low-income families. According to Fuentes, without intervention by age 2 the difference in cognitive development between children from low-income families and their peers is significant. “The earliest years are when it really matters.”

“Investing in early childhood is a poverty intervention,” said Portia R. Kennel, executive director of the nationwide Educare Learning Network. The Educare Learning Network’s 17 schools use public and private funding to provide

early intervention, and studies have shown Educare’s effectiveness in preparing children from families in poverty to be as ready for kindergarten as their peers. “Prevention and promotion yield long-term dividends.”



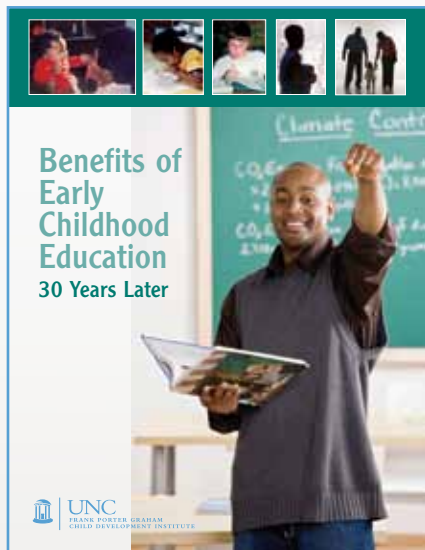
“We took the research and applied it to a community environment,” added Kennel, citing the influence of the Abecedarian findings on Educare’s vision.

In fact, early childhood education experts have capitalized on the Abecedarian Project’s findings on behalf of children across the country and around the world, with Abecedarian-based projects also in Romania, Canada, Mexico, China, Australia, and elsewhere.

With its roots in the Tar Heel State, innovative approach, and national and international reach, the Abecedarian Project exemplifies FPG’s ongoing mission to advance knowledge and enhance the lives of young children and their families. Over the last fiscal year, 300 FPG researchers, implementation and technical assistance specialists, staff,

and students have worked on more than 100 projects. FPG also houses several national centers and sponsors national and international conferences and other events.

The following sections describe many of the FPG projects over the past fiscal year that have helped families and prepared young children to compete and achieve: *Our Commitment to North Carolina, Our Ground-breaking Work, and Our National and International Influence.*







# Our Commitment to North Carolina

As a crucial institute in the state's oldest public university, FPG's work is dedicated in large part to improving the lives of North Carolinians. This work now benefits all of the Tar Heel State's counties through research, evaluation, professional development, implementation science, and technical assistance.

Findings from FPG's Abecedarian Project have shaped early childhood policy decisions in the U.S. and abroad, resulting in increased public investments in programs for young children. In 2011, FPG spearheaded the grant-writing effort that secured one such investment: a \$70 million federal *Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge* grant. Since then, FPG has continued to support and share expertise with the Early Childhood Advisory Council, the lead entity for the grant, as well as serving North Carolina's children and families through many other projects.

What follows are snapshots from the past year from a small sampling of our work on behalf of our state.

## FPG Transforms Reading Instruction for North Carolina Elementary School Children

Just outside the two-stoplight town of Norlina, North Carolina, Northside Elementary stands at the forefront of reading instruction. Teachers at the Warren County school are part of an innovative pilot program in rural NC that uses live webcam coaching to help teachers with struggling readers.

Along with educators in five other NC counties, Northside's teachers have been collaborating with FPG and the UNC School of Education on the Targeted Reading Intervention webcam project. The TRI project uses a literacy coach, based at FPG, who provides real-time feedback by webcam to teachers while the teachers work in 15-minute one-on-one sessions with students. Each teacher can see and hear her literacy coach, and the coach can see and hear her as she works with the student.

"Reading is the foundation for learning in school," says Lynne Vernon-Feagans, FPG fellow and Wil-

liam C. Friday Distinguished Professor in UNC's School of Education. "And with the Targeted Reading Intervention, struggling readers are gaining at the same rate as their peers."

Such rapid gains are atypical for struggling readers, according to Vernon-Feagans, who developed the Targeted Reading Intervention's webcam approach. She says the TRI also is less disruptive to classrooms than other interventions.

Vernon-Feagans believes the project has the potential to place the state's elite in early reading instruction, and not only because of its classroom effectiveness. "You can't believe how inexpensive it is," she says. Instead of districts covering the costs of employing a reading specialist, hiring one-on-one tutors, buying a new curriculum, or paying the travel expenses of experts to remote rural areas, now a half-time graduate assistant can web-coach up to 12 teachers already in place in the schools.

"I'll be honest. At first, I was against it," says Katherine Wilson, a kindergarten teacher at Northside. "I didn't see how I was going to pack something else into the school day. But it really does work."

Wilson is one of four teachers at the Warren County elementary school completing a certification program in the TRI. Joining her are Kendra Davis, Maryanne Henry, and Kristal Cozart, and together these teachers will help to sustain the TRI project at Northside by serving as coaches for their colleagues.

"We're the pioneers," says Davis, who teaches second grade. "Kids really love it, too. They show tremendous growth in their comprehension and fluency. They just get really motivated."

"The TRI builds confidence," says Henry, who adds that her first graders have valued the one-on-one time with her that the TRI provides. These sessions focus on reading for fluency, word work (a variety of strategies for helping students manipulate, say, and write words), and guided oral reading.

"It makes kids more willing to take risks with their reading," adds Henry. "They try harder words."

Northside student Kamaria Davis has received the TRI from Henry, and both the teacher and Kamaria's mother, Denise Davis, saw marked improvement in Kamaria's reading during the school year. "It helped Kamaria understand what she's reading," says Davis. "Now she's more interested in reading alongside me and in me reading stories to her."



*Northside's Targeted Reading Intervention Teachers*




Third grade teacher Kristal Cozart says the gains made by one of her students even helped to lessen sibling rivalry. "Two brothers that attend our school used to always fight and argue with each other," says Cozart. "The younger one, in kindergarten, could read, but the older one, in second grade, couldn't. Once the older one started making progress with his reading, they could read together and things calmed down at home."

At the other end of the TRI webcam, the FPG lead coach who works with Northside's teachers is Elizabeth Cutrer, a doctoral candidate in UNC's School of Education. "This is far more than a reading intervention," says Cutrer. "The TRI helps teachers really learn how to teach reading. Relationships take off with students, and the teachers see magical things."

According to Cutrer, children come to understand the TRI process so well that one elementary schooler by herself even led the FPG coach through an entire session over the webcam. Another student who had learned the TRI model in her first grade class helped a fellow struggling reader by trying to teach it to him.

"I have enjoyed my teachers using the TRI," says Northside principal Sheila Washington. The TRI veterans at her school say the intervention has provided a toolkit they can use to teach their students.

In addition to Northside, elementary schools in Columbus, Franklin, Hertford, Person, and Wayne counties have used the TRI to help over 100 North Carolina teachers with more than 600 struggling readers. Because most remote NC schools have online access to free iChat or Skype services, the TRI team believes its webcam coaching can be effective in rural and non-rural schools across the entire state—and beyond.

"This is the new way of doing things," Cutrer says. "The pioneers at Northside prove that if you can make an impact on a teacher, then she'll impact the lives of many children and colleagues."   

**"The TRI helps teachers really learn how to teach reading. Relationships take off with students, and the teachers see magical things."**

## Science and Success Coaches Keep NC Families Together

In Catawba County, FPG's "Success Coaches" are helping to keep parents and kids together, and Hickory resident Kelley Walker is only half-joking when she says her Success Coach saved her sanity.

Walker had held temporary custody of her 1-year-old granddaughter Karsyn since the girl was 2 weeks old, but permanent custody wasn't what Walker expected.

"I thought, you know, I can do this. I've already been a parent before. But I was wrong," she says.

"It's completely different when it's your own granddaughter. My friends, my family, my church—nobody I knew had gone through what I

was going through. But my Success Coach understood."

Success Coaches are a voluntary service that the Duke Endowment's Catawba County Child Well-being Project has provided since 2010 for over 50 families with adoptees, children reunified with their parents, and other children from foster care under new guardianship or legal custody. Administered through Catawba County Social Services, the project is the first specifically designed to support families after they welcome children into their homes and out of foster care.

In 2007, Catawba County and the Duke Endowment established a design team to plan the shape and scope of the project and provide critical input. The following year, FPG's National Implementation Research Network began providing intensive technical assistance focused on developing and carrying out the project.

Allison Metz, co-director of NIRN, is an expert on the science of putting ideas into practice, and she led the team that helped to implement the project. “We wanted to provide a sustainable program with a range of services to enhance the well-being of children and to give support to families so fewer children would return to foster care,” says Metz.

The Duke Endowment provided the grant that enabled Metz’s team and administrators from Catawba County Social Services take Success Coaches from plans to practice. “We heard the need for ongoing support and for families to have someone who was on their side,” says Dawn Wilson, the project’s director at Social Services.

In Kelley Walker’s case, that support was critical. “I felt very alone,” she says. “It helped to know there was someone I could call.”

Walker’s Success Coach, Christina DeNard, serves as a highly involved advocate for families, making home visits, providing assistance, and offering options. “From the beginning Kelley has always been ready to learn and do anything to strengthen Karsyn’s chances for success,” says DeNard. “I was always impressed with Kelley’s commitment.”

DeNard suggested that Walker and her granddaughter take advantage of the project’s Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, which Walker jokingly calls “Anger Management Classes.”

“Children don’t come with a manual,” says Walker. “The classes were the biggest help in making me a better mother. I think every parent should be able to do them with their child.”

Chrissy Triplett, who oversees the Success Coaches, says that FPG’s team provided the tools to help locate and hire the right coaches, who are on call 24/7. Despite the intense demands on coaches, the project still has the people Triplett originally hired. “I attribute that to the skills that FPG’s team taught me to use when I trained the coaches.”

Today, Karsyn is almost 4 years old. According to Walker, her granddaughter has proven very resilient, and the Success Coach service recently closed Walker’s case. “But they can call us anytime if anything changes,” says Triplett.

The initial evidence suggests that Kelley and Karsyn’s success story isn’t unusual for the Catawba County Child Wellbeing Project, which helps to reduce parenting needs and to correct children’s behaviors.

“The Success Coach is a stabilizing influence,” says

Wilson, who has served as project director since early in the planning process. “Fewer children whose families have used Success Coaches come back into foster care.”

FPG’s Metz believes the Duke Endowment project’s initial results show promise, and Wilson currently is working to fund a second phase to look at long-term benefits. “We want to help these children become successful, productive members of society,” says Wilson.


Walker says her experience with a Success Coach continues to help Karsyn and her. “Christina not only saved my sanity,” Walker says. “She probably saved Karsyn’s, too.” 



photo: Duke Endowment

Stacie Scott (left) with Success Coach Christina DeNard

## FPG Senior Scientist James J. Gallagher Wins NC's Old North State Award



Earlier this year, the Office of the Governor awarded The Old North State Award to James J. Gallagher, FPG senior scientist emeritus. Former state senator Howard Lee presented the award on March 1.

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 early childhood development expert.

Among his many accomplishments, Gallagher performed an integral role on Governor James B. Hunt's planning team to develop the North Carolina School for Science and Mathematics, which was the first residential school of its kind focusing on talented students in science and mathematics at the secondary level. Gallagher also was instrumental in updating state law and regulation to better serve gifted students in North Carolina.

Prior to joining FPG, Gallagher was the first chief of the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped in the then U.S. Office of Education. He oversaw a wide range of new legislation representing the first major efforts by the federal government to help children with disabilities. The Bureau was at the forefront in helping to implement laws to facilitate the education of children with disabilities. Under the tenure of Commissioner Jim Allen, he was promoted to Deputy Assistant Secretary for Planning, Research, and Evaluation.

Gallagher has produced over two hundred articles in a wide range of professional journals, as well as 39 books, including one of the most widely used textbooks in gifted education, which he co-authored with his daughter, Shelagh Gallagher.

In 2009, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) honored Gallagher as the third inductee into the NAGC Legacy Series. Decades, full of his seminal research and service, had passed since he had delivered a timeless speech to the NAGC.

"When we were a lusty, brawling adolescent of a nation, we spent our physical resources as if there were no tomorrow," said Gallagher in 1965. "We now find to our sorrow that there is. This generation cannot afford to be a spendthrift in intellectual resources as it has been in its physical gifts. This price of failure is too high."

Now in his thirty-third year with FPG, Gallagher continues to contribute to important research and writing on gifted education, exceptional children, and early childhood education.

## FPG Partners with NC Community Colleges to Cultivate High-Caliber Teachers

Through a new partnership with FPG, the Early Childhood Education Department at Vance-Granville Community College is offering a cutting-edge program for the next generation of teachers who will serve young children.

Tracey Bennett, who has taught at VGCC for ten years and now serves as department chair, is collaborating with FPG's *Supporting Change and Reform in Preservice Teaching in North Carolina* (SCRIPT-NC).

Tracey West, SCRIPT-NC's principal investigator, says the FPG project works with community college programs across North Carolina to better prepare early childhood educators to meet the needs of young children with disabilities and children who are culturally and linguistically diverse.

"It's been a real eye opener," says Bennett. "We had a good program already at Vance-Granville, but with SCRIPT-NC we realized what we really wanted to be."

Not only did SCRIPT-NC help Bennett and her faculty enrich the content of their courses with the latest evidence-based research, the partnership also led her department to examine its role in the community. "We realized that programs in our area are serving a lot of young children whose families' first language isn't English—or they don't speak English at all," says Bennett. "These programs also serve children with different kinds of abilities."

Early in the partnership, SCRIPT-NC's team organized a retreat that brought together the commu-

nity's program directors, the VGCC department's alumni, Bennett's early education faculty, and other stakeholders. "The retreat really sharpened our perspectives," says Bennett. Since then, her department has focused on developing early childhood educators who are best equipped to work for local programs.

With the benefit of SCRIPT-NC's expertise and evidence-based resources, Bennett and her department began revising and "tweaking" courses. In a practicum course that Bennett teaches, her new approach to the class elicited much deeper material from her students. "They're learning



*Tracey West at SCRIPT-NC works to enrich content in NC Community College teacher education programs.*

to look at what's best for each child developmentally now," she says. "They can identify areas for growth, while looking at the whole cultural context."

"One of SCRIPT-NC's key objectives is to help future early childhood educators in North Carolina become more knowledgeable and comfortable working with young children from diverse backgrounds," says Dale Epstein, who, along with Chih-Ing Lim, serves as co-principal investigator for the project.

SCRIPT-NC has roots in Crosswalks, an earlier FPG project that also prepared educators to work with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. FPG scientist Camille Catlett, an investigator on the SCRIPT-NC team, has been the project's primary liaison with Bennett. "In the last year and a half, Tracey already has taken a good program a long way toward being an extraordinary one," says Catlett.


Bennett anticipates a crucial shift in how her department's students will interact with children and

families. “Instead of only addressing themes, new graduates will focus on each child’s particular needs, each classroom’s particular needs, and the families’ particular needs,” she says. “And on how they can really address those needs.”

Bennett believes her program is developing more reflective teachers. “They also understand that their learning doesn’t stop when they graduate from our program,” she says. “And they’ll be better equipped to give feedback to their peers in early childhood programs, too.”

Currently, SCRIPT-NC works intensively with four community colleges in the state. In addition, the FPG project offers online resources, including course-specific “landing pads” and widely viewed webinars open to all North Carolina community colleges.

Bennett advises other community colleges entering into a partnership with SCRIPT-NC to be prepared. “It’s definitely beneficial,” she says. “And there’s a whole mindset change involved. It’s a challenge.”

Along the way, Bennett had to challenge the preconceived notions of some of her own department’s students. “You can’t say you want to teach in these programs just because you love kids,” she says. “But if you’re somebody who likes to witness children’s growth and see the light bulbs come on for the child and the family, then early childhood education is for you.” 

## FPG Evaluations Guide North Carolina’s Successful Pre-Kindergarten Program

When the President used the State of the Union address earlier this year to praise Georgia’s pre-kindergarten program for its universal access, many North Carolinians wondered how the Tar Heel State’s targeted pre-k program compared. In March, FPG researchers reported their findings from an ongoing evaluation of the NC Pre-K

Program, calling the program “a strong pre-k experience for at-risk 4-year-olds throughout the state.”

NC Pre-K was designed as a high-quality program to serve at-risk children in order to prepare them for success in school. Since the program’s inception as “More at Four” in 2001, it has served over 223,000 four-year-olds. Throughout this time, FPG researchers have provided evaluations of the program’s quality and effectiveness for children.

Led by senior scientist Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, who also headed the FPG team that evaluated Georgia’s universal pre-k program, researchers found that NC Pre-K has continued its trend of improving teacher qualifications with regard to education levels and birth-to-kindergarten teaching licensure.


In addition, FPG’s evaluation team found little change in the quality of classroom practices after the program moved from the state’s Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) in 2011, when More at Four was renamed the NC Pre-K Program. Scores were in the medium to high quality range for a variety of different aspects of classroom practices, including overall classroom quality, teacher-child instructional interactions, language and literacy environment, and sensitivity of teacher-child interactions.

These results follow earlier FPG findings showing that children enrolled in More at Four made significant gains in language and literacy, math, general knowledge, and social skills.

Peisner-Feinberg and her colleagues determined that graduates of the state’s program continued to make gains as kindergartners. For children with lower English language proficiency, the program had even stronger effects. In addition, 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 NC end-of-grade

(EOG) tests than similar children who had not attended the program.

Peisner-Feinberg believes that other states will not only be looking at such universal pre-k programs as Georgia's when they examine their own, but that continuing research on the benefits of the more targeted programs like NC Pre-K also will provide valuable information for administrators and policymakers.

"The ongoing NC Pre-K evaluations clearly show the importance of strong program standards that use research-based quality indicators," says Peisner-Feinberg. "They will serve as an important resource for the design of successful statewide programs that have been shown to have positive effects for children—findings that have been sustained for over a decade at this point." 

### FPG Study Reveals How Rural North Carolinians Capitalized on Community Strengths and Public Programs to Survive the Recession

Rural North Carolinians utilized a critical web of resources during the Recession of 2007–2009. Not only did many NC residents use public assistance programs, they also capitalized on strengths often associated with rural communities in order to endure the severe downturn.

Nationally, the recession was the longest and, by most measures, the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, with unprecedented job losses, high rates of unemployment, and long-term unemployment. During the heart of the recession, the need for food assistance programs was its

highest in 34 years. Low-wage jobs rapidly replaced high-wage jobs, and by 2010 the poverty rate had spiked to over 17%. In North Carolina, unemployment has remained higher for longer than in four previous recessions, and the state has yet to fully recover from the crisis.



*FPG has evaluated NC's pre-kindergarten program since 2001.*

Allison De Marco, principal investigator for the "Employment Instability and Food Insecurity of Rural North Carolinians" study, used information collected from FPG's long-running Family Life Project to determine how the recession affected residents

in three rural, low-wealth NC counties: Sampson, Wayne, and Wilson.

Using a dataset that oversampled for low-income residents, De Marco focused on how the crisis disturbed parents' work, affected the economic strain on families and their ability to put food on the table, and influenced the use of public assistance programs. She also examined how friends, neighborhoods, and other social supports shaped family experiences. Because the Family Life Project has been in the field since 2003, she was able to compare detailed snapshots of rural families before and during the recession.

The United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service recently published the results of De Marco's study. Of the 653 families providing information, nearly half faced at least one indicator of employment distress: a lost job, pay reductions, reduction in hours, a transition from permanent to temporary job status, or a move to nonstandard working hours.



Indicative of the instability for these families during the recession, only 47.5% of respondents remained consistently employed during the downturn, and almost 23% were consistently unemployed.

Not surprisingly, this employment distress was related to higher levels of economic strain and the use of public assistance programs, particularly the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as the food stamp program), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Unemployment Insurance. According to De Marco, even during better economic climates, rural communities often face special nutrition challenges, and participation in food assistance programs typically is much higher in rural areas.

“Food costs are high, and food quality is limited,” says De Marco. “Supermarkets and healthy food are less accessible, and the burden of nutrition-related disease is greater. For these reasons, and because the proportion of income-eligible families is higher in rural areas, food assistance programs are vitally important in these communities.”

De Marco’s research looked at “food insecurity,” a measure of a family’s ability to put food on the table. During the recession, there was a significant rise in food insecurity. However, SNAP and Unemployment Insurance helped buffer families against such uncertainty. Over half of the North Carolinians in De Marco’s study were enrolled in SNAP during the recession.


In addition to public assistance programs, rural North Carolinians also relied on a range of social supports. The Family Life Project’s researchers collected information about each resident’s impressions of his or her neighborhood, organized groups (churches, educational groups, sports teams, etc.), friends and families, closest partner, and “current life situation” (a global indicator of all social supports).

De Marco found that during the recession, support from family members and closest partners helped alleviate food insecurity, as did the sum total of all social supports. In addition, the support of the community was a significant buffer against the economic strain that families endured.

These findings suggest that while residents of the three NC counties in De Marco’s study relied on public assistance programs to survive, they also capitalized on strengths indicative of rural communities. According to De Marco, residents of rural areas often provide stronger connections to religious institutions, more access to extended family, and a greater sense of community—the very sorts of social supports many families needed to endure the state’s economic crisis.

“This knowledge will enable policymakers to make more informed decisions about how to modify policies and programs to better match the situations in these communities,” says De Marco.

According to De Marco, many rural communities would benefit from asset development programs, which emphasize financial literacy, matched savings, and home ownership. Additionally, more emphasis on workforce training programs, training for displaced workers, and economic initiatives that address limited job opportunities can help to alleviate many of the factors that contribute to high levels of employment distress in rural North Carolina.

“It’s also important to remember that rural communities have strengths,” says De Marco, a former social worker who has spent years on the ground with families. “Community-building strategies can increase access to social supports and bring rural residents to existing public programs, which were critical during the recession.” 

## FPG Mentors the Next Generation of NC Scientists

Before Margo Williams enrolled in Psychology 395 for her last semester at Carolina, she had no idea a single course would draw on both her majors, allow her to contribute to important research on young children, and cement her career choice.

The Charlotte native, who graduated in May, will soon start working as a research assistant in a UNC lab, while applying to PhD programs in clinical psychology. Graduate programs that she has already interviewed with are chiefly interested in the work she did for PSYC 395 at FPG.

Since the start of the 2012–2013 school year, Williams, a psychology and Spanish double major, worked in FPG's Infant and Child Assessment Lab. She began as a volunteer and then worked to fulfill PSYC 395 course requirements. The course allows students to work on research projects under a mentor's guidance.

"It's a real-life application of what we're learning in other classes," says Williams. "It's an amazing experience."

At FPG, Williams has applied her clinical psychology training to a research study that relies on her carefully giving touchscreen computer assessments to young children to test their working memory and attention levels. She has scored recorded assessments and parents' reports of their children's typical behavior.

Williams's coursework at FPG has served several innovative UNC School of Medicine studies headed

by John Gilmore. Gilmore's research is designed to improve knowledge about brain development in young children, including twins, to understand ways in which early differences contribute to later development.

The opportunity to sharpen her skills on research at FPG "helped me figure out I want to go to graduate school in clinical psychology," Williams says. "Research is such an important part of graduate school. In psychology, you're expected to know how to conduct research. My time at FPG has been incredibly helpful."

Her responsibilities also united her two majors. Williams had spent a semester in Seville, Spain, through UNC's Study Abroad program. At FPG her Spanish prepared her to navigate a language barrier. "Some kids, especially the twins, are primarily Spanish-speaking," says Williams. "This is the first vocation where I've ever been able to combine my majors."

She attributes the fusion of Spanish into her work to her mentor for PSYC 395. Barbara Goldman, longtime FPG senior scientist and director of the Behavioral Measurement and Audiovisual Center, leads Williams's research internship.



"Dr. Goldman is great," says Williams. "She wants us to get the most out of the course, out of our experience at FPG, and she tailors our involvement to what we want to do. She worked Spanish into it for me."

For some assessment measures, Williams helped to translate instructions, which all staff can use with children who are more comfortable speaking Spanish. She also administers touchscreen assessments in Spanish.

"I found a population I love to work with," says Williams. "And it's made me want to work with this population even more in the future."

Goldman feels Williams's observational skills and understanding of human behavior have helped to make her an excellent fit for the lab. "Margo is wonderful to work with," adds Goldman. "She has a calming and supportive style with children and a fantastic work ethic."

Williams has no doubt that her participation in pioneering research at FPG has changed the trajectory of her life. "I've learned what I want to focus on," she says. "I know what I want to continue with."

These stories represent only a portion of FPG's accomplishments in North Carolina. In addition, many other projects this past fiscal year also advanced knowledge and enhanced lives in the state.

**Children Living in Rural Poverty:  
The Continuation of the Family Life Project**

Sponsor: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

**ELEVATE: A Technology Mediated Professional Development Program in Literacy:  
Helping Teachers Close the Achievement Gap for High Needs Children in Low-Wealth Rural Communities**

Sponsor: The Rural School and Community Trust

**Enhancing Communication for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners**

Sponsor: North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission

**FirstSchool Implementation**

Sponsor: W.K. Kellogg Foundation

**From Evaluation to Inquiry**

Sponsor: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

**Healthy Places North Carolina**

Sponsor: Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust

**Joint Attention Mediated Learning Intervention for Toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Their Families**

(also in Indiana and Kansas)  
Sponsor: U.S. Department of Education,  
Institute of Education Sciences

**The Longitudinal Development of African American English and Its Role in School Achievement**

Sponsor: National Science Foundation

**NextGen: Supporting the Next Generation of Interdisciplinary Researchers**

Sponsor: Mead Johnson Nutrition

**North Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council Support**

Sponsor: Office of the North Carolina Governor

**North Carolina Early Learning Challenge Support**

Sponsor: Office of the North Carolina Governor

**North Carolina Early Learning Network**

Sponsor: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

**North Carolina Office on Disability and Health**

Sponsor: North Carolina Division of Public Health

**North Carolina Part C Family Survey Project**

Sponsor: North Carolina Division of Public Health

**Process Evaluation of North Carolina's Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting Program**

Sponsor: North Carolina Division of Public Health

**Promoting Early Communication Skills and Self-Regulation Among Poor Infants and Toddlers**

Sponsor: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

**Recognition and Response: Addressing Early Learning Difficulties in Math Through an RTI Model for Pre-K**

(also in Florida and Maryland)  
Sponsor: U.S. Department of Education

**The Role of Behavioral and Instructional Match in the Prediction of Early Classroom Engagement and Academic Achievement**

Sponsor: U.S. Department of Education

**The Sociolinguistic Significance of the Post-Secondary School Stage in the Longitudinal Development of African American English**

Sponsor: National Science Foundation

**Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System**

Sponsor: North Carolina Division of Child Development

FPG projects know no geographic boundaries, and just as people outside North Carolina often benefit from our work inside the state, North Carolina's children and families also benefit from *Our Groundbreaking Work* across the country and around the globe.



# Our Groundbreaking Work

FPG's groundbreaking work has implications for children and families everywhere. Our researchers, specialists, staff, and students work on dozens of projects in seven areas of emphasis: 1) developmental disabilities, 2) early care and education, 3) physical and social health, 4) professional development, technical assistance, and implementation science, 5) public policy and evaluation, 6) racial, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity, and 7) international initiatives.

This work capitalizes on FPG's wide and varied expertise, and every project at FPG has its own story. What follows are snapshots of some of our accomplishments this past year.

## **FPG's Pioneering Study Challenges Assumptions About Autism Treatments**

In the first study designed to compare longstanding comprehensive treatment models for children

with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), a team of researchers from FPG has found that preschoolers with ASD in high-quality classrooms make gains during the school year regardless of the treatment model—a surprising result that may have important implications for special-education programs and school classrooms across the country. The study has drawn international coverage from news, health, education, and science media outlets.

“Previous research has shown that when children with autism spectrum disorders have access to high quality early intervention, the result is improved developmental performance, but until now debate has persisted over which approach to use,” says FPG fellow Brian Boyd, the study's co-principal investigator and the lead author of an article revealing the findings in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.

Early diagnosis and effective intervention can reduce ASD's lifetime \$3.2 million price tag for treatment and care by two-thirds, and more children

are being diagnosed with autism each year. Two frequently used comprehensive treatment models for ASD have a long history: LEAP (Learning Experiences and Alternative Program for Preschoolers and their Parents) and TEACCH (now known only by its acronym).

The TEACCH model is based on creating an environment that meets the characteristics and learning needs of young children with autism, often using visual schedules and work systems. LEAP bases its treatment approach on making accommodations in regular early childhood education settings that include children who are typically developing.

FPG's study examined the relative effects of the LEAP and TEACCH school-based comprehensive treatment models when compared to each other and to special education programs that do not use a specific model. The multi-site study took place only in high-quality classrooms and enrolled 74 teachers and 198 3-5 year-olds in public school districts.

The study found that children made gains over the school year regardless of the classroom's use of TEACCH, LEAP, or no specific comprehensive treatment model. "Each group of children showed significant positive change in autism severity, communication, and fine motor skills," says FPG scientist Kara Hume, also a co-author on the article. "No statistically significant differences were found between models, which challenged our initial expectations—and likely the field's."

Research has long demonstrated that classroom quality is an important predictor of typically developing children's social, language, and academic outcomes. This study may reflect the importance of general classroom quality in promoting the positive development of children with ASD, too.

Moreover, because all of the classrooms in FPG's study were high quality, the findings also could reflect that teachers in high-quality classrooms are aware of and use similar practices to educate children with autism.

**"This study may reflect the importance of general classroom quality in promoting the positive development of children with ASD, too."**

"This study may shift the field's thinking about comprehensive treatment models designed for young children with ASD," says Samuel L. Odom, FPG's director and the study's principal investigator. "Perhaps it's not the unique features of the models that most contribute to child

gains but the common features of the models that most influence child growth." [FPG](#)

## **FPG Offers Online Courses for Continuing Education Units**

For the first time, faculty and professional development providers can send learners to free, self-guided, self-paced, online FPG courses designed for continuing education units (CEUs) for early childhood teachers. Through a new partnership between FPG's Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge (CONNECT) and Quality Assist, Inc., these eight courses integrate Project CONNECT's subject matter with QA's interactive online learning. The first courses are available now, with plans for a new course each month until the last debuts in January 2014.

The QA-CONNECT course topics complement FPG's CONNECT modules, which have been popular across the country and around the world since FPG scientists developed them in 2010 for university faculty and professional development providers. Each module focuses on a specific research-based practice or set of practices for meeting the needs of young children in inclusive settings and is organized within an innovative 5-Step Learning Cycle™. CONNECT has been a resource for over 90,000 online users in the last two years alone.

“We received lots of inquiries about offering CEUs for CONNECT material,” says Pam Winton, FPG senior scientist and principal investigator of Project CONNECT. “The Quality Assist CONNECT courses make this possible at a time when many administrators are looking at efficient ways of delivering high quality professional development in the areas we cover.”

The new QA-CONNECT course titles include: “Foundations of Inclusion,” “All, Some and Few: Tiered Instruction,” “Storybook Conversations,” “Weaving Inclusion into Everyday Activities,” “Adaptations that Work,” “Communication for Professional Collaboration,” “Powerful Family Partnerships,” and “Smooth Moves: Program Transitions.” FPG’s Project CONNECT will continue to update its modules to support and complement the new courses.

By emphasizing problem solving and the importance of multiple perspectives and sources of evidence, the courses and the modules focus on building early childhood teachers’ capacities to make evidence-based decisions, a hallmark of teacher excellence. [fpg](#)

### **Cutting-Edge Research: Children’s Complex Thinking Skills Begin Forming Before They Go to School**

New research shows that children begin to show signs of higher-level thinking skills as young as age 4½. Previously, scientists attributed the development of higher-level thinking to knowledge acquisition and better schooling, but this new study shows that other skills, not always con-

nected with knowledge, play a role in the ability of children to reason analytically.

Lindsey Richland, assistant professor of comparative human development at the University of Chicago, and Margaret Burchinal, senior scientist at FPG, reported their research in January in the journal *Psychological Science*, which shows for the first

time that children’s executive function has a role in the development of complicated analytical thinking.

Executive function includes such complex skills as planning, monitoring, task switching, and controlling attention. High early executive function skills at school entry are related to higher than average reasoning skills in adolescence.

Growing research suggests that executive function may be trainable through pathways, including preschool curriculum, exercise, and impulse control training. Parents and teachers may be able to help encourage development of executive function by having youngsters help plan activities, engage in pretend play, and learn to stop, think, and then take action.

Richland and Burchinal studied a database of 1,364 children from birth through age 15. The group was fairly evenly divided between boys and girls and included families from a diverse cross-section of ethnic and income backgrounds.

The study found a strong relationship between high scores among children who as preschoolers had strong vocabularies and were good at monitoring and controlling their responses (executive function) to later ability on tests of understanding analogies.

“Overall, these results show that knowledge is necessary for using thinking skills, as shown by



*FPG's CONNECT courses are now available free and online for CEUs.*

the importance of early vocabulary,” Richland says. “But also inhibitory control and executive function skills are important contributors to children’s analytical reasoning development.” [FPG](#)

## **ECTA Center Spearheads a New Framework for Systems Serving Young Children With Disabilities**

FPG’s Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center is developing a cutting-edge framework for systems to ensure high quality, effective, and efficient early intervention and preschool programs for young children with disabilities. The ECTA Center is collaborating with national, regional, and state partners on the project and already has identified six partner states and a technical work group composed of national technical assistance providers, researchers, and consultants to help guide the development process.

The Center chose its partner states in order to ensure that the new framework for systems reflects and applies to the diversity of state systems and is useful to early intervention (Part C) and preschool (Section 619) programs for children with disabilities. Partner states include Delaware, Idaho, Minnesota, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia.

Based on evidence and best practices, the ECTA Center’s system framework will guide state-level Part C and Section 619 coordinators and staff in evaluating their current systems and identifying areas for improvement, as well as providing direction for building systems that require, support, and encourage the implementation of proven practices.

In addition to supporting the local implementation of effective practices, the ECTA Center’s framework and its corresponding self-assessment will serve as tools for states to self-evaluate and plan the extent to which they implement the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the federal law ensuring services to children with disabilities. To these ends, the framework and assessment will

address key components and subcomponents of an effective Part C and Section 619 system, such as governance structure, funding and finance, personnel, and data systems, and will include indicators scaled to measure the extent and quality of implementation.

The ECTA Center also will provide general, targeted, and intensive technical assistance related to using the framework and self-assessment, as well as other resources to help all states improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their systems. [FPG](#)

## **FPG Researchers Provide Comparison of Universal and Targeted Pre-K Programs**

FPG’s Margaret Burchinal, Donna Bryant, and Diane Early have completed research with the University of Virginia’s Robert C. Pianta and Purdue University’s Aryn M. Dotterer comparing universal and targeted pre-kindergarten programs, which found no difference in children’s achievement between these two types of programs.

Targeted programs serve only children with particular characteristics or risk factors associated with school failure. (States differ on what constitutes a risk factor.) As their name suggests, universal programs provide pre-k classroom experiences regardless of income or background.

The findings appear in the journal *Early Child Development and Care*, and the Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL) at the University of Virginia Curry School of Education also released a research brief summarizing the study.

Results show that universal classrooms had a significantly lower proportion of poor children in the class and a significantly higher proportion of white children per class compared to targeted classrooms. Targeted programs had shorter classes, teachers with fewer years of education, and better child-teacher ratios compared to universal programs.



## Council for Exceptional Children Honors Mary Ruth Coleman

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) honored Mary Ruth Coleman for her contributions to the field of gifted and special education with a Showcase Session at its annual convention in San Antonio, TX. Coleman, who was CEC president in 2007, is a senior scientist emerita at FPG.

“Collaboration with amazing people has been central to everything that I have been involved in,” Coleman says. “The showcasing of this work is truly the honoring of the many individuals whose dedication, insights, and efforts were crucial to its accomplishment.”

The Council for Exceptional Children is the largest international professional organization dedicated to improving the educational success of individuals with disabilities and/or gifts and talents. Jamie Hopkins, also a former CEC president, played an integral role in organizing Coleman’s Showcase Session.

“I have known Mary Ruth for approximately 20 years, having collaborated with her on various CEC committees and work groups,” says Hopkins. “I found Mary Ruth to be one of the most dedicated individuals in the field of education. She is deeply committed to improving the lives of individuals with exceptionalities.”

Coleman began her career as a teacher in public and private elementary schools, with both regular classroom and special education assignments. She later served three terms on the Board of Directors for the Association for the Gifted (TAG),

including one as President, three terms on the Board of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), and two terms on the Board of Directors for the Council for Exceptional Children.

In 2010, Coleman co-authored the seminal textbook *Educating Exceptional Children* with Samuel A. Kirk, Nicholas J. Anastasiow, and FPG senior scientist emeritus James J. Gallagher. Gallagher delivered a video address to Coleman’s Showcase Session.

Coleman also has directed several FPG projects, including U-STAR~PLUS (Using Science, Talents, and Abilities to Recognize Students—Promoting Learning for Under-Represented Students) and Project ACCESS (Achievement in Content and Curriculum for Every Student’s Success). She was co-principal investigator for the Early Learning Disabilities Initiative, and she co-directed North Carolina’s Statewide Technical Assistance for Gifted Education Center.

“For decades, Dr. Coleman has been a central member of the FPG community,” says FPG director and senior scientist Samuel L. Odom, who also spoke at Coleman’s Showcase Session. “Her contributions have enriched us as a research and professional development community, and



her work has enriched the lives of children locally and nationally.”

“During the almost 30 years that I have been at FPG it has been my privilege to work with many outstanding people,” Coleman says. “Colleagues in school districts across the country have continued to improve the work we do, shaping it in practical and creative ways.”

Odom adds that Coleman’s research and service have exemplified major missions of the university. “Her work represents well the concepts of community engagement and engaged scholarship. We celebrate a great career.”

Findings also revealed that some aspects of structural quality (e.g., hours per day and teacher education) were higher in universal programs, whereas process quality (e.g., staff-child interactions and instructional feedback) was higher in targeted programs. Results also indicated that children in universal classrooms made greater gains in expressive language compared to children in targeted classrooms, but the type of program was not related to gains in any of the other measures of early academic skills. While targeted and universal pre-k programs have different characteristics and outcomes, overall, children's achievement was not different across programs. [FPQ](#)



*Presenters at the National Press Club included FPG's Dina Castro, with Eugene Garcia & Linda Espinosa.*

### **FPG Sponsors Debate-Shaping Forum on Early Development and Education of Dual-Language Learners**

FPG's Center for Early Care and Education Research—Dual Language Learners (CECER–DLL) sponsored a Policy Forum on Early Development and Education of Dual Language Learners on May 14 at the National Press Club in Washington, DC.

CECER–DLL's principal investigators also briefed House and Senate staffs on a report, prepared by FPG and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which state and federal lawmakers can utilize when considering how to fund and assess Head Start, publicly funded pre-school, and literacy and cognitive development programs.

Recent developmental science research on dual-language learners has spotlighted new and important advances. These research efforts point to policy considerations, which have taken on greater importance with President Obama's budget proposal for Preschool for All. The President

has proposed additional spending for both early childhood education and programs to assist dual-language learners.

The primary speakers included: Dina C. Castro, senior scientist, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, and CECER-DLL director and principal investigator; Eugene Garcia, CECER-DLL co-principal investigator; and Linda Espinosa, CECER-DLL co-principal investigator.

In their brief to Congressional staffers, CECER-DLL provided a synthesis of research on dual-language learners and made several federal-level policy recommendations, addressing: early and accurate assessments of DLLs; strengthening human capital (teachers) in early

childhood education programs; enhancing the coherence of programmatic components; continuing to explore dual-language programs for DLLs; and, creating data bases to monitor and assess DLL performance. [FPQ](#)

### **FPG's National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute Offers Its Most Extensive Programming**

The National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute has become one of the premier educational opportunities for anyone involved in the care and education of young children with special needs in inclusive settings. For 13 years, the Institute has drawn people from around the country and the globe to learn about the latest research findings, models, and resources guiding inclusive policy, professional development, and practice, as well as to develop collaborative relationships and cross-agency systems to support early childhood inclusion. For three days each May, the Institute provides administrators, researchers, practitio-

ners, and families a chance to meet, learn from, and problem-solve with peers.

This year, 10 national technical assistance projects committed time and resources to planning and implementing the Institute, and the programming was the most extensive in Institute history. After three pre-institute half-day workshops, the organizers—FPG senior scientist Pamela J. Winton and former FPG investigator Shelley deFosset—welcomed 435 participants. The keynote address followed, featuring disability rights pioneer Micah Fialka-Feldman in *Through the Same Doors: Living a Fully Inclusive Life* (see page 26).

After that, a plenary session convened with a panel of top federal policy leaders: Linda Smith, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for EC Development, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Melody Musgrove, Director, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education; and Steven Hicks, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Early Learning, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, U.S. Department of Education. The panelists offered emerging information on federal early childhood policies, including updates on the Obama administration's new early childhood agenda and its implications for inclusion. Rob Corso, Research Assistant Professor at Vanderbilt University, moderated.

Over three days the Inclusion Institute's 90-plus presenters offered 11 reflection sessions and 41 concurrent sessions. Next year, the Institute will open its doors again in May. [FPG](#)

## FPG's "Educare Implementation Study" Releases Findings

Since 2005, FPG has led the Educare Learning Network implementation study of Educare—state-of-the-art schools open full-day and full-year serving at-risk children from birth to 5 years old.

Educare schools provide high-quality instruction and stimulating learning environments to help students arrive at kindergarten ready to learn at the level of the average 5-year-old in the United States.

Young children from low-income, distressed environments start school far behind their more advantaged peers. This achievement gap persists to high school and is linked to social and economic problems later in life, including illiteracy, teen pregnancy, high dropout rates, and unemployment. These at-risk children typically have smaller vocabularies, are less likely to know their letters and numbers, and consistently score below their higher-income peers in early learning and math.

In the 2010–11 school year, 12 Educare Schools from across the country had participated in the study, which now includes more than 1,800 students. FPG senior scientist Donna M. Bryant and FPG scientist Noreen M. Yazejian outlined their preliminary findings in the FPG online report "Educare Implementation Study Findings—August 2012," which revealed that more years of Educare attendance are associated with better school readiness and vocabulary skills.

These findings are especially important because school readiness—which includes comprehension of concepts like colors, letters, shapes, sequences and numbers—encompasses important skills for classroom success. Children from high-risk populations, like those served by Educare Schools, typically score well below the national average and are usually developmentally several months behind their more advantaged peers.

In addition, vocabulary skills consistently predict later academic success. Low-income children typically enter kindergarten with vocabulary levels and pre-literacy skills well below those of their middle-class peers—and this achievement gap is extremely difficult to close in elementary and high school.

However, Educare Schools narrow this initial gap. If at-risk children can enter kindergarten with a

vocabulary that approaches that of the average American child, their chances improve of becoming good readers, succeeding in elementary school, graduating from high school, and staying on a successful life trajectory. [FPG](#)

## FPG Offers Free 24/7 Implementation Training

FPG's newly launched Active Implementation Hub is a free, online learning environment for use by practitioners, educators, coaches, trainers, and others involved in active implementation and scaling up of programs and innovations. Its goal: to increase the knowledge and improve the performance of persons engaged in actively implementing any program or practice.

The Active Implementation Hub includes:

- Modules and Lessons—self-paced, computer-based training on active implementation;
- A Resource Library—searchable implementation resources and tools (e.g., planning tools, assessments, and activities); and
- Learning Spaces—shared, online spaces for learning and applying implementation knowledge and practices.

FPG's State Implementation & Scaling-up of Evidence-Based Practices Center (SISEP) and FPG's National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) support and drive the Active Implementation Hub. [FPG](#)

## FPG Plays Key Role in International Disabilities Forum

FPG investigator Karen Luken participated in an International Visitor Leadership Program with delegates from the Palestinian Territories last fall. The program functions under the auspices of the U.S. Department of State, and the local sponsor was

the Triangle International Affairs Council (IAC), a community-based organization that champions knowledge and understanding of world affairs and culture.

On behalf of IAC, the NC Department of Health and Human Services convened a group of disability leaders and advocates to discuss how issues relating to the rights of the disabled are addressed in the United States, to learn best practices that facilitate inclusion and independent living for the disabled, and to examine how rights for the disabled factor into regulations on education, labor, and society.

Luken has served as principal investigator for FPG's "Enhancing Communication for SANEs" (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners), a project that developed protocols for use with women with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She shared information with international delegates on the need for public health data to document the health of people with disabilities. She also offered examples of policies and educational resources that address the issue of violence against people with disabilities and discussed the role of universities in promoting research and improved practice. [FPG](#)

## FPG Study Finds That Conflict Increases in Teacher Relationships with African American Students

In the first study of teacher-student relationships that examines student behaviors and literacy skills in an exclusively rural population, researchers have determined that boys and African American students experience increasing conflict with their teachers as the school year progresses, regardless of the teacher's ethnicity. The latest issue of *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* reveals the findings of the FPG study, which explored teacher-student relationships in 20 kindergarten and first

grade classrooms in the rural southeast.

“Increasing evidence suggests that relationships are important for children’s academic and social skills,” says FPG’s Kathleen Cranley Gallagher, the study’s lead author. “Understanding how relationships develop between teachers and students is crucial.”

Previous studies have shown that students in better relationships with teachers are more engaged in their work, participate more often in classroom activities, and like school more. Not surprisingly, conflict in teacher-student relationships negatively impacts children’s adjustment to school and learning. Earlier research also suggests that African American students may reap more academic benefits from positive relationships with teachers than do white students.

Teachers commonly struggle in their relationships with children of both genders who are less self-regulated, less attentive, and more hostile in their reactions. Gallagher’s team determined that increasing conflict that teachers reported in their relationships with boys was explained by the boys’ behaviors. That is, conflict did not increase with boys who did not present challenging classroom behaviors.

However, regardless of student behavior, teachers in Gallagher’s study reported more conflict in their relationships with African American students at the end of the year than the beginning, even after Gallagher’s team accounted for additional factors that included gender, maternal education, and teacher experience and ethnicity. Student literacy skills also had no bearing on the increasing conflict in these relationships.

In addition, the research from Gallagher and her team contradicts a previous study that found that non-white teachers were more likely to rate their relationships with non-white students positively. In this examination of rural classrooms, African American and white teachers did not differ generally in their reported relationship conflict with African American students.

Because the study determined that teacher relationships with African American students not only grow in conflict but also begin with less closeness, thoughtfully building relationships with children’s families—on the families’ terms—may be essential. By visiting students’ homes and providing ongoing opportunities for communicating and connecting, teachers might help to provide a foundation for better teacher-student relationships.



“It’s possible that an early feeling of less closeness arises from early uncomfortable interactions that emerge into growing conflict over the school year,” says Gallagher. “Our challenge is to identify factors that enhance positive relationships and minimize conflict for all children.”

The study’s co-authors include FPG’s Kirsten Kainz and Lynne Vernon-Feagans, as well as Kelley Mayer White from The College of Charleston. [F](#) [P](#) [G](#)

## Disability Rights Pioneer Delivers Keynote at FPG's Inclusion Institute

When FPG's 2013 Inclusion Institute convened on May 13, the keynote speaker did not hold an advanced degree or have a single peer-reviewed publication to his credit. But 28-year-old Micah Fialka-Feldman is a longtime veteran of many battles for inclusion, including his well-known victory over Oakland University.

Fialka-Feldman's first fight for inclusion came when he was in second grade. His elementary school directed him through a different entrance because of his intellectual disability.

"I knew I wanted to be included when I went in a separate door," he says. "I told my parents I wanted to go in the same door as all my other friends."

He won that battle, and opening doors would become the long-running theme of Fialka-Feldman's life. He became a national speaker on disability pride and justice, addressing numerous state and national conferences and a long list of organizations and agencies that includes the Office of Special Education Programs, International Parent-to-Parent, the National Council on Independent Living, and many others. He also has spoken to university classes, community and advocacy groups, parent groups, and middle and high school classes. In December 2009, CNN named Fialka-Feldman one of its Most Intriguing People.

"I knew that people with disabilities had to fight," he says.

His most famous fight came against Oakland University in Rochester,

Michigan. He was enrolled in Oakland University's Post-Secondary Transitions program, a three-year non-degree curriculum that offers high-school graduates the opportunity to audit classes.

Often when people unfamiliar with disability rights hear this story, they assume it could only have taken place long ago—when civil rights issues were first at the fore in the U.S.—and not as late as 2007.

"I was trying to live in the dorm," he says. Living off-campus meant a two-hour bus commute to classes, and Fialka-Feldman also wanted the complete college experience that comes with immersion in campus social life.

The university had approved his housing application, but the school suddenly withdrew that approval. "I had a move-in date and everything," he says. "And then the vice president found out and said 'no.'"

Just as he had refused to be barred from the same door as others as a second-grader, though, he was determined to cross the threshold to campus housing. He took his case to the university's Board of Trustees, arguing that Oakland's innovative



Transitions program for people with disabilities would fit well with a move toward inclusion by admitting him to campus housing.

Each time he approached the Board, though, it declined his request, justifying its refusals in part because he was not a fully matriculated student.

"Every day I would have to see the vice president in the hallways," says Fialka-Feldman. "I was very nice to her, but it was hard to see the person who wasn't on your side."

Almost everyone else was on his side, though. Students and faculty at Oakland University compiled more than a thousand signatures backing Fialka-Feldman's request for inclusion.

When Oakland University administrators wouldn't open campus housing to him, he finally sued. After a two-year case, a U.S. District Court ruled in December 2009 that he could move into a campus dorm.



"It was a very happy time for me and my family," he says about his move-in day in early 2010. "And the whole student body was on my side."

Fialka-Feldman's website includes a video of him moving in. On it, he says that his case was "opening everyone's mind to the full college experience being available to all students."

He finally could enjoy the convenience of living on campus and mingling more often with other students. "They learned I'm a great guy to live with," he says. "I'm very outgoing, and I'm funny."

In 2011, he was invited to speak about his housing battle to Syracuse University's DisAbleD & Proud Conference at the Taishoff Center for Inclusive Higher Education. "There was every kind of person, and every kind of disability," he later recounted for the university's Education Exchange. "No one was left out."

The conference inspired his next major decision: to study at Syracuse. In January 2012, he began working on the university's Certificate in Disability Studies and serving as a teaching assistant. "Syracuse," he says, "knows how to think outside the box."

He soon joined a student group dedicated to fostering on-campus inclusive environments. "People with disabilities, if they want to be included, should meet other people and do great things."

Fialka-Feldman still takes classes and teaches at Syracuse. He also has advice for anyone looking to start an advocacy group for children or adults with disabilities. "Make sure the groups are run by people with disabilities, with help from others," he says. "People with disabilities know how to run groups and help other people with disabilities."

"If people have questions about disabilities, I can help them learn," he adds. "My parents have helped me learn how to be a good self-advocate, and I've had lots of friends who have been great role models for me."

The importance of another role model on Fialka-Feldman's life was impossible to miss for anyone who visited his dorm room shortly after he had won his battle at Oakland University. Adorning a wall was an iconic poster of the Reverend Martin Luther King.

"He's a hero of mine," says Fialka-Feldman. "He's such a great leader for the civil rights movement."

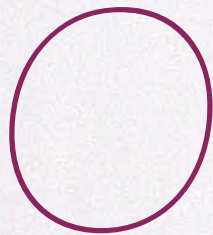
Fialka-Feldman is a pioneer, too, and disability justice is his brand of civil rights.

"It's very cool," he says, before adding a line that evokes his hero. "I think I give people hope and dreams."





# Our National and International Influence



*Our Commitment to North Carolina and Our Groundbreaking Work* portray only a portion of FPG's impact. FPG's work comprises all of the projects that contribute to *Our National and International Influence*.

As one of the nation's foremost and largest multidisciplinary institutes devoted to the study of young children and their families, FPG crosses numerous disciplines from anthropology and audiology to psychiatry and public health.

We remain committed to sharing our expertise with the public and supporting the understanding and use of evidence-based practices. Our scientists and staff travel the state, the nation, and the world sharing knowledge and insight with policy makers, colleagues at colleges and universities, and early childhood professionals in private enterprise. We deliver dozens of keynote addresses and invited presentations every year, and we host international visiting scholars. We serve as lead-

ers in professional associations, government task forces, and community organizations, as well as on advisory, editorial, and foundation boards. We also have testified before Congressional committees and briefed their staffs, and our projects have drawn national and international coverage by a wide variety of media outlets—from the *Henderson Daily Dispatch* to *US News & World Report*.

FPG's projects are numerous and varied, and each has its own story to tell. What follows is a comprehensive list of our projects from the last fiscal year. For a fuller understanding of the scope and impact of our work, please visit [www.fpg.unc.edu](http://www.fpg.unc.edu).

**A Family-Genetic Study of Autism and Fragile X Syndrome**

**A Family-Genetic Study of Language in Autism**

**A Gathering of Leaders**

**A Study of Child Care Settings in Multiple Communities**

**An Integrated Lifecycle and Intergenerational Approach to Health and Other Capabilities**

**An Investigation of the Overlap of Autism and Fragile X Syndrome: Insights From Language Prosody**

**Analyzing the Abecedarian Study Through Age 30 to Forecast a Lower Bound on the Likely Long-Run Outcomes**

**ASD Toddler Initiative: Promoting the Use of Evidence-Based Practices for Toddlers With Autism Spectrum Disorders**

**Autism Professional Development Center in Saudi Arabia**

**Be Active Kids**

**Building Capacity for Sustainable Improvement (ARRA)**

**Building Implementation Capacity to Promote and Support Evidence-Based Home Visitation in North Carolina**

**Building Implementation Capacity to Promote and Support Evidence-Based Home Visitation in Washington**

**Building Implementation Capacity: Demonstrating a National Approach to Implementing, Sustaining and Scaling Evidence-Based Practices for the Treatment and Prevention of Secondary Complications for Individuals With Spinal Cord Injuries**

**CalSTAT Project**

**Center for Early Care and Education Research—Dual Language Learners (CECER-DLL)**

**Center for IDEA Early Childhood Data Systems**

**Center on Secondary Education for Students With Autism Spectrum Disorders (CESA)**

**Child Care and Early Education Quality Features, Thresholds, Dosage, and Child Outcomes Study Design**

**Children Living in Rural Poverty: The Continuation of the Family Life Project**

**Community Health Inclusion Index Project**

**CONNECT: The Center to Mobilize Early Childhood Knowledge**

**Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Vocabulary Approach for Dual Language Learners**

**Delaware Higher Education Project**

**Delaware Part C Service Coordination Modules**

**Development of a Computerized Assessment of Executive Function for Preschool-Aged Children**

**Early Childhood Center**

**Early Childhood Development Secondary Data Analysis Project**

**Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center**

**ELEVATE: A Technology Mediated Professional Development Program in Literacy: Helping Teachers Close the Achievement Gap for High Needs Children in Low-Wealth Rural Communities**

**Employment Instability and Food Insecurity of Rural North Carolinians During the Recession**

**Enhancing Communication for SANEs**

**Evaluation of Georgia's Pre-Kindergarten Professional Development Initiative**

**Evaluation of the Head Start Designation Renewal System**

**Evaluation of the NC Pre-Kindergarten Program**

**Evidence-Based Approaches to Building Quality for Young Learners Who Are Culturally, Linguistically, and Ability Diverse**

**Family Adaptation to Fragile X Syndrome**

**FirstSchool Implementation**

**From Evaluation to Inquiry**

**Georgia Early Childhood Program Evaluation Project**

**Georgia Licensing and Monitoring Study**

**Georgia Pre-Kindergarten Evaluation**

**Healthy Places North Carolina**

**Human Capital Interventions Across Childhood and Adolescence**

**Improving Parenting Capacity to Promote Safe Driving for Adolescents with ADHD**

**Inclusive Classroom Profile: Pilot Study**

**Increasing Independence and Task Completion in Adolescents and Adults With ASD Using Independent Work Systems**

**Joint Attention Mediated Learning Intervention for Toddlers With Autism Spectrum Disorders and Their Families**

**Key Early Childhood Practices for Fostering Young Children's Communication Skills**

**Measurement Development: Quality of Caregiver-Child Interactions for Infants and Toddlers**

**Measuring Working Memory: Designing Algorithms for Computer-Based Extraction of Summary Variables**

**Mid-South Regional Resource Center**

**National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC)**

**National Evaluation Partner for the Educare Learning Network Implementation Study**

**National Professional Development Center on Autism Spectrum Disorders**

**National Professional Development Center on Inclusion**

**NC Part C Family Survey Project**

**New Hampshire Early Childhood Advisory Council (SparkNH) TA Project**

**NextGen: Supporting the Next Generation of Interdisciplinary Researchers**

**North Carolina Early Childhood Advisory Council Support**

**North Carolina Early Learning Challenge Support**

**North Carolina Early Learning Network**

**North Carolina Office on Disability and Health (NCODH)**

**Nuestros Ninos Program: Promoting School Readiness for Dual Language Learners**

**Obesity Research Project on Prevalence, Adaptations and Knowledge Translation in Youth and Young Adults With Disabilities From Diverse Race/Ethnic Backgrounds**

**Ohio Alternative Response Project**

**Post Doctoral Training in Special Education Research**

**Postdoctoral Research Training Fellowship in Early Childhood Education Sciences**

**Pragmatic Skills of Young Males and Females With Fragile X Syndrome**

**Process Evaluation of NC's Maternal, Infant & Early Childhood Home Visiting Program**

**Project to Provide Training and Technical Assistance to Long-Term Foster Care Grantees**

**Promoting Academic Success of Boys of Color**

**Promoting Early Communication Skills and Self-Regulation Among Poor Infants and Toddlers**

**Provincial System Support Program Expert Consultation**

**Quality Counts Evaluation: Validation Planning**

**R&R-DLL Model: Development & Pilot Study**

**Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge TA Center**

**Ready Classrooms**

**Recognition and Response: Addressing Early Learning Difficulties in Math Through an RTI Model for Pre-K**

**Rhode Island BrightStars Evaluation**

**SCRIPP**

**SERP OUSD Partnership**

**SERRC Early Childhood TA Support**

**Snapshot Data Collection Project**

**Stability and Change in Attachment and Social Functioning, Infancy to Adolescence**

**State Implementation and Scaling-Up of Evidence-Based Practices (SISEP) Center**

**Supporting Change and Reform in Preservice Teaching in North Carolina (SCRIPT-NC)**

**Synthesizing and Interpreting the Evidence on Early Intervention**

**Tacoma Community College Paraeducator Project**

**Technical Support to CDC EHDI Team on Part C Programs**

**Temperamental Precursors of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder**

**The Duke Endowment Catawba County Project: Technical Assistance on the Implementation and Scaling-Up of Evidence-Based and Innovative Practices**

**The Early Childhood Outcomes Center**

**The Longitudinal Development of African American English and Its Role in School Achievement**

**The Partners Project: Working Together to Enhance Inclusive Early Childhood Environments**

**The Role of Behavioral and Instructional Match in the Prediction of Early Classroom Engagement and Academic Achievement**

**The Sociolinguistic Significance of the Post-Secondary School Stage in the Longitudinal Development of African American English**

**The State of Alaska Early Intervention and Infant Learning Program**

**The Targeted Reading Intervention: A Web-Based Professional Development Program Targeting K-1 Classroom Teachers and Their Struggling Readers**

**The Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children**

**Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)**

**To Build Implementation Capacity at ENW RCC**

**University Research Council—CONNECT**

**Wake County Home-Based Service Integration Consultation**

**WRRC TA Project**

FPG's national and international reach also includes the impact of our highly-sought and well-respected publications. The final section serves as a compilation of our resources from the past fiscal year.



# Resources

## Books and Book Chapters

- Buysse, V., & Peisner-Feinberg, E. (Eds.). (2013). *Handbook of Response to Intervention in early childhood*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
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## New Handbook Provides Comprehensive Look at Response to Intervention in Early Childhood

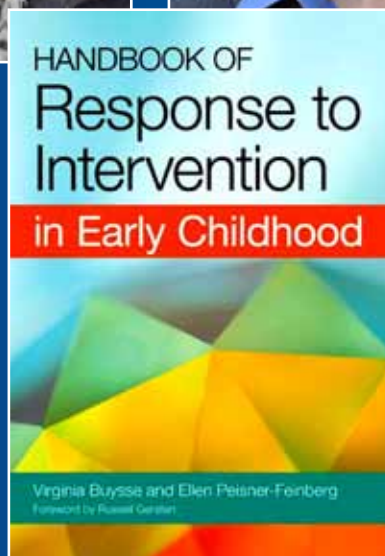
FPG senior scientists Virginia Buysse and Ellen Peisner-Feinberg have edited the first comprehensive examination of the use of Response to Intervention (RTI) to promote pre-k children's development and learning. The *Handbook of Response to Intervention in Early Childhood* delivers an overview of how RTI is designed to be used in pre-k, including detailed information on its defining principles and features, its evidence base, and program-level supports needed for implementing it.

The handbook also provides seminal material on specific RTI models, such as Recognition & Response (R&R)—which was developed at FPG. The R&R model uses small-group lessons that focus on vocabulary, letter names, and sound awareness to provide enriched instruction, more teacher attention, and more opportunities to practice. It also embeds learning in the environment and other activities in order to reinforce skills taught during small-group instruction. In October 2012, the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation and Campaign for Grade-Level Reading released a comprehensive report and action plan for helping children with learning disabilities reach grade-level reading proficiency, which identified the R&R model as good practice in action.



In the *Handbook of Response to Intervention in Early Childhood*, editors Buysse and Peisner-Feinberg present cutting-edge research and scholarship from over 60 leading experts, including 13 FPG investigators. This foundational resource serves as an essential reference for early childhood practitioners, researchers, administrators, faculty, and policy makers.

About Recognition & Response and RTI in pre-k: [www.randr.fpg.unc.edu](http://www.randr.fpg.unc.edu).



More on the *Handbook of Response to Intervention in Early Childhood*: <http://products.brookespublishing.com/Handbook-of-Response-to-Intervention-in-Early-Childhood-P667.asp>

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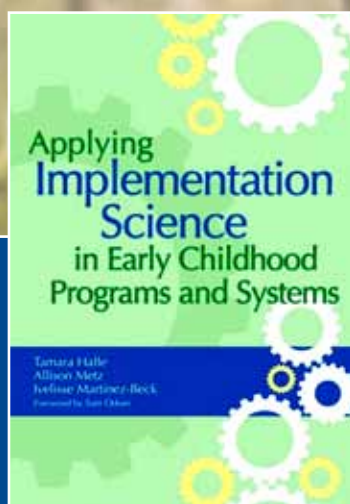
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## Groundbreaking Book Brings Implementation Science to Early Childhood

FPG scientist Allison Metz has edited the first research volume on applying implementation science—an evidence-based framework for bridging the research-to-practice gap—to early childhood programs and systems. Joining Metz, who co-directs FPG's National Implementation Research Network, are fellow editors Tamara Halle of Child Trends and Ivelisse Martinez-Beck of the Office of Planning, Research & Evaluation (OPRE) in the Administration for Children & Families. Earlier this year, Brookes Publishing released *Applying Implementation Science in Early Childhood Programs and Systems*.

Improving outcomes for young children and their families may start with choosing evidence-based curricula, interventions, and practices—but it doesn't end there. Ensuring sustained changes to early childhood programs and systems necessitates the effective and consistent implementation of interventions, which isn't easy or straightforward. With contributions from more than 25 early childhood researchers, including six FPG investigators, this essential reference not only helps to ensure effective implementation of interventions, but also provides guidance on scaling up and sustaining interventions in order to help as many children as



possible. Early childhood program administrators can read how to replicate and sustain best practices; researchers can find information on conducting more informed program evaluations; and policymakers can identify what it really takes to have effective, sustainable programs and systems.

About FPG's National Implementation Research Network:  
<http://nirn.fpg.unc.edu/>

More on *Applying Implementation Science in Early Childhood Programs and Systems*:  
<http://products.brookespublishing.com/Applying-Implementation-Science-in-Early-Childhood-Programs-and-Systems-P676.aspx>

## FPG Releases Spring 2013 *Early Developments*

Earlier this year, FPG published the Volume 14, number 1 issue of *Early Developments*, which focuses on *Public Policy & Evaluation*.

Articles include:

“Strengthening Services for Georgia’s Young Children”

“What Can We Learn from the Education Model?”

“The Evaluation of North Carolina’s Pre-Kindergarten Program”  
and

“The QUINCE Study: Can On-Site Consultation Significantly Improve Child Care Quality?”

...as well as news about the ECTA Center, NIRN’s tenth birthday, and much more.



To read it:

<http://fpg.unc.edu/resources/early-developments-vol-14-no-1>

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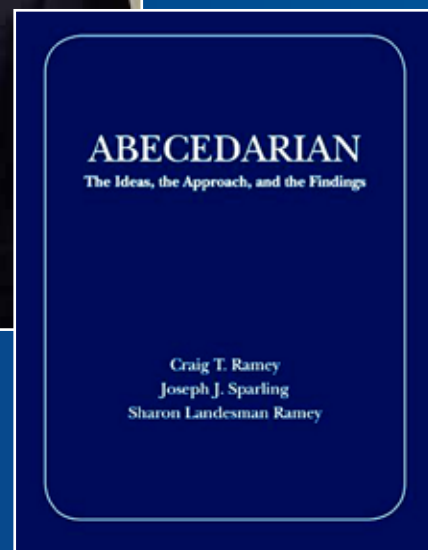
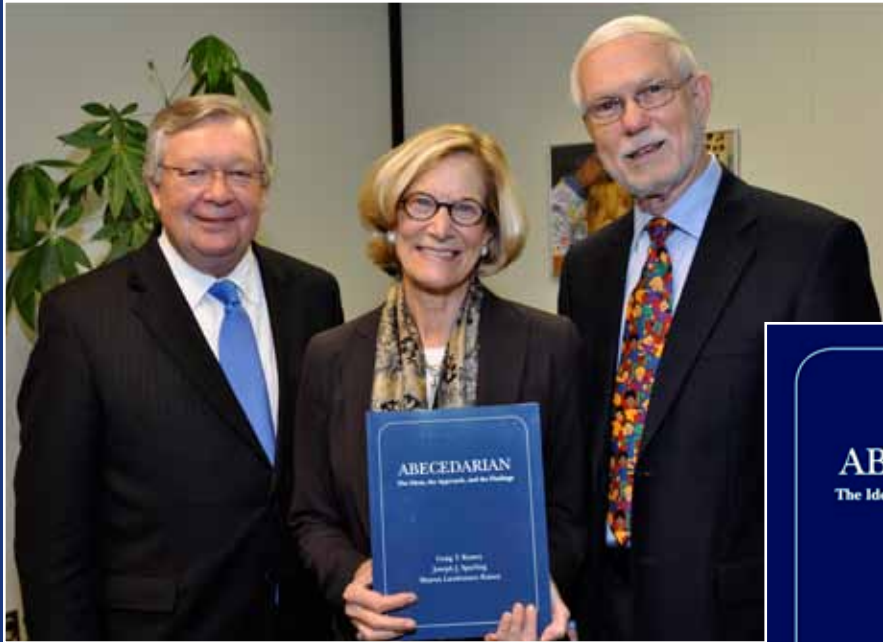
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## Original Abecedarian Project Leaders Publish an Inside Look



FPG's reputation as a premier early childhood research institute has its roots in our longest running research study—the Abecedarian Project. This past fall marked the 40th anniversary of the enrollment of infants into this highly regarded scientific study.

But what exactly was the Abecedarian Approach, and how did it promote such long-lasting benefits for participants? Members of the original Abecedarian Project leadership, including Craig Ramey, professor and distinguished research scholar at the Virginia Tech Carilion Research Institute, and Joe Sparling, FPG senior scientist emeritus, published a comprehensive volume detailing the project titled *Abecedarian: The Ideas, the Approach, and the Findings*. The

new book, authored with former FPG director Sharon Landesman Ramey, shares the inside story of the project from its design through research highlights and policy implications. The National Institutes of Health provided a grant to publish the book in order to document early educational interventions with proven benefits.

About *Abecedarian: The Ideas, the Approach, and the Findings*: [www.socio.com/abecedarian.php](http://www.socio.com/abecedarian.php)

For more on FPG's Abecedarian Project, refer to the *Introduction: The Promise*

*of Comprehensive Early Childhood Education and the Ongoing Legacy of FPG's Seminal Abecedarian Project* and <http://fpg.unc.edu/projects/abecedarian-project>

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Child Development Institute**  
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