

How are legislative policies affecting our children?

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

early *Developments*

Autumn 1997

Volume 1, No. 3



Frank Porter Graham
Child Development Center



Child Care Policy

early Developments

Vol. 1, No. 3

Supervising Editors

Virginia Buysse, Pam Winton

Editor

Loyd Little

Graphic Design

Miki Kersgard

Circulation

Jay Hargrove

Photography

Don Trull

Editorial Offices

521 S. Greensboro Street, Suite 206
Carrboro, NC 27510

Postal Address

Send change of address to:

Jay Hargrove

CB #8185, UNC-CH

Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8185

Periodicals postage paid at
Chapel Hill, NC

Early Developments is published four times a year by the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

6,500 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of \$5,000.00 or \$0.77 per copy.

Early Developments is funded in part by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and in part by PR/Award Number R307A60004, administered by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education. Contents of articles do not necessarily represent the positions of the U.S. Department of Education. Endorsement by the federal government should not be assumed.



ECRI:SU—policy change at the national level, p.4



SMART START—policy change at the state level, p. 7



STAGE—policy change at the local level, p. 8



NCEDL constituent advisory boards, p.12



NCEDL Policy briefs—synthesizing research, p.15

In this issue

of *Early Developments*, we look at child care policy from the national, the state, and the local levels. We also examine the role of *Early Childhood Research Policy Briefs*, produced by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), and how policymakers and administrators function as NCEDL advisors.

We hope you enjoy this issue and find our information useful.

Early Developments is available online at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center (FPG) web site <www.fpg.unc.edu>

Fall is a busy time at FPG with many of our researchers involved in state, regional, and national conferences. For example, NCEDL, which is based at FPG, and the SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE) held a conference on "Early Childhood in the Carolinas: Research to Policy to Practice" in late September.

The conference was an intensive two-state dialogue between early childhood researchers and early childhood policy and program decision makers, focusing on critical issues concerning young children and their families and school readiness. Organizers are using the conference to set up a model to help state policy makers turn research into practice.

Reprint permission

Feel free to reprint articles from our newsletter; we ask that you credit *Early Developments*. If you have questions or need more information about our investigators and projects, check the FPG home page at <<http://www.fpg.unc.edu>> or contact Loyd Little, editor—phone: 919-966-0867, fax: 919-966-0862, email: <loyd_little@unc.edu>.



From the director's office

The rules Public policy—private needs

Do the rules and regulations that allocate resources meet the needs of young children and their families?

This month's "From The Director's Office" is a guest column by Jim Gallagher and Robin Rooney, two investigators at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. Jim, director of FPG from 1970 to 1987, is a nationally recognized policy researcher and head of the Policy Strand of the National Center for Early Development & Learning. Robin has specialized in policies pertaining to federal legislation and in personnel preparation in early intervention.

—Don Bailey
Director, FPG

POLICY SPEAKS THROUGH THE RULES AND REGULATIONS that allocate scarce resources to almost unlimited social needs. For the next few months the American public seems destined to hear much about young children and their development. This is probably because of a collective decision by the popular media, encouraged by key policy players, that early child development is a "hot" issue. How can we take advantage of this interest to create a permanent infrastructure for enduring policy that will outlast the predictably limited attention span of the media and the public?

Let's examine what key policy questions need to be considered as we review the rules and regulations that govern programs for young children and allocate resources to those programs.

Is there a public commitment to making things better for young children?

Judging by the public's actions to date, (allocation of society's resources) the current answer is: "No," or at best "Maybe." Unless we can convince the public that the answer is: "Yes, young children's needs are important," then all other discussion fades into a dialogue among professionals, not likely to yield major social changes.

Fortunately, we have a broad base of data, all of which clearly indicate that resources spent early in a child's development can pay off significantly. It is critical that we use those data to convince funding agents that this investment is a wise and lasting one.

How can we combine our existing resources to help young children develop more effectively?

President Eisenhower once said that we cannot afford to have the nation saved four times over, once each by the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines. Similarly, we cannot afford the expense, nor is it prudent, to give every agency devoted to young children, all that is requested. Our current policy problem is not that states lack plans for young children, it is that they have too many—five or six at least. What each state needs is a Comprehensive State Plan for Young Children which will identify common goals, combine available

(see NOTES, page 6)

From policy

AN INCREASING NUMBER of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in the U.S. are served by early intervention services (formerly Part H and now called Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), but there's room for improvement, according to a study in three states by researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center.

A team of researchers is wrapping up a five-year study of the federally mandated and state-implemented early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth to age 3. Significant findings by the Early Childhood Research Institute on Service Utilization (ECRI-SU) include these:

- Use of early intervention services is high, particularly compared to the utilization rates of other entitlement programs.
- Communities have put together a comprehensive array of resources to meet the diverse needs of children and families. The number of programs used in the nine communities studied ranged from 11 to 66 per site.
- Services are primarily child oriented. Surveys showed that families expect services to focus on their child, but would be open to a broad family focus, if introduced properly and at the right time.

- There is a direct relationship between the nature of the services provided and the quality of program leadership. In communities where the program's leader knows recommended practices, services provided to all children consistently reflect these practices, with the exception of the provision of therapies.

- Therapies most often consist of a more traditional, clinical, and specialized approach than an integrated one.

- Families and service providers often believe that individual (pull-out) therapy is better than therapy integrated into the natural environment.

- Most early intervention programs do not have a system of recording expenditures so that the cost of services can be calculated.

The ECRI-SU research team is headed by Gloria L. Harbin of FPG and Thomas T. Kochanek of Rhode Island College, Providence, RI. Nine communities were selected in Colorado, North Carolina and Pennsylvania for the principal sites. A total of 72 children and their families participated in case studies and a larger sample was followed for two years.

Harbin said, "In examining the implementation of this law, we realized just how

monumental the legislation was. It is very far reaching. It asked people to change lots of different things all at one time. If people had been asked to change two or three things, they could've focused on those and perhaps done it quicker or more efficiently. People have made progress in implementing this law, but there has been more progress in some areas than in others."

Some indications of progress are: More children with disabilities are being identified at younger ages, and families report little delay getting into

be useful to families. In general, mothers expect services to focus on their child. Assessment focuses on child skills, and in general there is no systematic assessment of family needs.

"We started out saying, what services do children and their families get? Then we said, why is it that certain kids and families get what they get? Is it state policies? Is it something about the communities they live in? Or, is it something about the families themselves? We found that it was an interaction. The most positive outcomes occurred when there were certain factors that existed

"...when we looked at Pennsylvania's policies we found there was nothing that required programs to look outside of themselves."

programs once they find them. Many programs expend substantial effort to broaden the array of services and options. In general, families feel that service providers are supportive and responsive to their child's needs. Only 18% of families studied use less than 50% of their scheduled services.

On the other hand, families report that they would use more services if they were offered. Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP) documents, in their current form, do not appear to

in the system, the service providers, the families, and in the relationship between the service providers and the families. You couldn't just say everything will be OK if you just have three specific things in the service system. It had to be the whole package. We confirmed a lot of what has been theorized about recommended practices, and that's very exciting for our field."

For example, progress has been made in the coordination of the system of services. On a 10-point scale assessing the extent

to practice

How three states implemented federal policy for infants with disabilities

of coordination, the mean rating across the communities studied was 7.2. In a previous study by Harbin and her colleagues, participants indicated that the extent of coordination in North Carolina prior to 1986 would likely have been rated at 2.5.

Harbin said, "We found certain links that influence that package: the leadership at the community level and their knowledge of recommended practices, their ability to visualize a comprehensive, coordinated system, and their ability to work and play well with others. This speaks to the importance of early childhood leadership development programs with implications for policymakers. Getting a master's degree will not ensure those three things. The person has to continue to be a lifelong learner."

ECRI-SU looked closely at the relationship between state policies and outcomes. Harbin said, "Of the nine communities

and very privatized programs. Their programs have many fewer positive outcomes for children and families. And a lot of it goes back to state policy."

But since only three states were involved, how about flukes? Harbin said, "Colorado has done a great deal of training, and it turned out that its assessment practices were the best of the three states. Taking another example: Of the three states, North Carolina has placed a lot of emphasis on not only telling people about recommended practices, but the state will not fund programs unless they agree to follow those practices. We found that in North Carolina a lot more children proportionately were served in inclusive settings than in segregated settings. Hardly any children in North Carolina were served in segregated settings, but that is not true in the other two states."

Overall, program administrators report that many therapists lack the knowledge and desire to use

and families. In many communities, the resourcefulness of program administrators (obtaining grants, use of

cooperation. Furthermore, it mandates two interagency structures. North Carolina programs were rated high in



"...in Colorado, those communities that pushed coordination did well..."


Medicaid, "deals,") increased options for services. Also, researchers found that curriculum activities for children most often reflect a focus on the use of test items to guide intervention instead of using a routines-based focus for intervention.

Harbin's researchers found that a significant determinant in outcomes was how comprehensive and how coordinated service systems are. "The more comprehensive and coordinated the service system is the better the outcomes for children and their families. This was an assumption of the law but there had been no data that policymakers had; they just assumed this would be true. Now, we have some data, even if it is only nine communities."

She said that one state—Pennsylvania—had the least coordinated service system of the three states studied and "when we looked at Pennsylvania's policies we found there was nothing that required programs to look outside of themselves. On the other hand, North Carolina really stresses interagency coordination and

terms of outcomes and coordination. Colorado was in-between, encouraging inter-agency coordination but not mandating it. And in Colorado, those communities that pushed coordination did well, but those that didn't, did less well."

She advises parents, service providers and program administrators to be patient and not give in to frustration. She said that she has learned that it takes a long time to implement policy, particularly something on the scale of IDEA.

"Many people want it to happen sooner. I want it to happen sooner. But there's good reason to go slowly — we don't want casualties while we're trying to get it right and trying to teach people to get it right. Because the causalities would be children and their families. It's very difficult to watch somebody fall through the cracks and not get what they need. That's part of the frustration you find in wanting things to happen more quickly. But the reality is that we really do need to set realistic expectations." 



"...North Carolina really stresses interagency coordination and cooperation."

studied, three had programs that were really like programs in the 1970s, using a traditional form of early intervention. All three were from the same state. When you look at that state's policies, you see that they included no funding strings,

an integrative approach to therapies. The study found that some program administrators appear to lack the knowledge necessary to set up an administrative structure for a more transdisciplinary and inclusive learning experience for children

NOTES

resources, and make clear what is needed for the future.

This is no small task. It will require the best thinking of many different professional disciplines and many different policy makers. The variety of laws passed at the state and federal level for different subsets of children, at different times, and for different purposes, each have their own rules and regulations that do not easily allow for collaboration. Yet, collaborative planning is a top priority if we are to achieve some practical outcome of all this current interest.

How do we build an infrastructure for quality services for young children?

Over the years service areas such as health, education and social services have learned what an infrastructure for quality consists of, and have created some isolated elements in such a structure. Let's review these components.

Materials Development

We clearly need to continue to develop materials and procedures that enhance the quality of child care, whether that care is in child care centers, family day care, or at home.

Personnel preparation

There is close to universal agreement that top quality early childhood personnel is a key to quality programs. But there are two enormous barriers to making this a reality. First, salary levels do not match our expectations of personnel. Second, we do not consistently integrate our major personnel preparation entities, such as community colleges or higher education institutions, to improve practices at the service delivery level.

Demonstration

High quality programs for young children are needed to demonstrate how effective practice can be made practical. Once effective practice can be seen in action it is easier to upgrade service delivery.

Research

We need to add to the knowledge base on child development and effective programs, including research on the developing brain and the various interventions that pay off in tangible benefits to the children and their families. This requires both basic and applied research.

Dissemination

A central communications network is needed to allow service centers for young children to communicate with one another and with professionals so that ideas can be exchanged, new methods passed along, and more effective dissemination of research-to-practice information. Currently, programs are isolated, and there are few provisions at the state level to create any kind of an intrastate or interstate network.

Financial

To determine what money is allocated, we need a mechanism to track money spent in early childhood from the level of the governor's office. North Carolina once had a Children's Budget that showed where all the money on children was being spent. Some similar device that fits the needs of individual states would seem to be required.

We also need to know what costs await us if we follow certain initiatives. Many proposals for helping young children have been generated by emotion. Good intentions need to be backed


continued from page 3

with fiscal responsibility so that the public has confidence that the plan being followed ties emotional intentions to the financial commitment made to children and families.

Accountability—Report Card on Young Children

If a state and its elected leaders commit to a comprehensive plan, there should be equal commitment to accountability. The people who pay the bills need a clear statement of how we are doing. On the report card, we should publish the number of children being served through various programs and services, the number of children entering kindergarten each year who can demonstrate that they are ready and able to learn, the number of children raised in poverty, the infant mortality rate, and so on. In short, the report card should tell what the public is getting for its investment.

Such a collaborative effort will create varying degrees of professional discomfort. Some disciplines and organizations will be forced out of their accustomed roles and routines. No one said that change and improvement would be easy, but for perhaps the first time, we will be able to say that we have the interest of the general public on our side. There is much to be gained for young children if we put our minds and hands to the task.

In another time, Benjamin Franklin remarked, "Gentlemen, we must all hang together or assuredly we will all hang separately." Fortunately, those of us who toil in early childhood programs do not face that violent result, but our hopes and dreams for services for young children are at similar risk if we do not collaborate across agencies and disciplines. 

6

Recent publications

by researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Welfare Reform and You

R.M. Clifford. (1997). *Young Children*, 52(2), 2–3.

Partnerships with Families

R.M. Clifford. (1997). *Young Children*, 52(3), 2.

Partnerships with Our Colleagues

R.M. Clifford. (1997). *Young Children*, 52(4), 2.

Partnerships with Other Professionals

R.M. Clifford. (1997). *Young Children*, 52(5), 2.

Commentary: Personal Dimensions of Leadership

R.M. Clifford. (1997). In S.L. Kagan & B.T. Bowman (Eds.), *Leadership in early care and education* (pp. 103–104). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Giving Children



A SMART START

North Carolina's program demands more policy decisions at the local level

ALTHOUGH NORTH CAROLINA'S SMART START PROGRAM is only four years old, it has been cited by early childhood professionals as one of the most comprehensive public-private initiatives in the nation to help children enter school healthy and ready to learn.

Many of the building blocks of Smart Start grew out of research done at the Frank Porter Graham Center. FPG's current role is to conduct the statewide evaluation of the Smart Start program. The evaluation includes both performance and outcome measures. For example, this spring, FPG investigator Donna Bryant announced at a press conference that this year's evaluation showed that child care has improved in the counties where the program first began. Evaluators

visited 187 centers and interviewed child care directors as they examined a variety of childcare indicators. They found that 11% more child care centers scored in the good-to-excellent range on a measure of environmental quality compared to 2 years earlier.

"Our results show that child care quality was better in 1996 than in 1994 and that the level of quality was related to Smart Start efforts," she said. "The fact that we have seen changes of this magnitude in the formative years of Smart Start when programs were just getting off the ground is really quite positive."

Smart Start is not just one program; it's many. Local Smart Start partnerships of parents, educators, child care providers, nonprofits, churches and business people decide how to improve (or provide, in some cases) local child care, health care, and family services to children under the age of six. Thus, one community may allocate additional money toward solving transportation problems; another community may beef up child health screenings; and yet another may further the education of child care providers. All communities conduct multiple programs.

According to the NC Partnership for Children, which is the lead state agency, during Smart Start's first three years:

- More than 154,000 children received higher quality early education and care statewide.
- More than 34,000 children received childcare subsidies so their parents could work.
- More than 72,000 children received early intervention and preventive health screens.

Smart Start began as a pilot in 18 of North Carolina's 100 counties. Later, 37 counties were added, and this year the state allocated enough money to expand the program to all 100 counties.

FPG evaluates the overall Smart Start program, but local partnerships perform their own evaluations and this, according to Bryant, is a lesson for other states. "At the local level, many counties simply don't have the capacity to conduct an evaluation in the same way as institutions like FPG. It's not an unreasonable request to ask for accountability, but it's very difficult to conduct good evaluations," she said.

As a result, Bryant's Smart Start team this year formed an evaluation assistance team to help local groups design and carry out evalua-

(see *SMART START*, page 11)

Challenge or Boredom? Gifted Students' Views on Their Schooling.

J. Gallagher, M.R. Coleman, C.C. Harradine. (1997). *Roeper Review*, 19(3), 132-136.

The Role of Policy in Special Education

J. Gallagher. (1997). In James L. Paul, et al. (Eds.), *Special education practice: Applying the knowledge, affirming the values, and creating the future* (pp. 26-42). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.

Translating Knowledge into Action

J. Gallagher. (1997). In James L. Paul et al (Eds.), *Special education practice: Applying the knowledge, affirming the values, and creating the future* (pp. 227-240). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.

(continued on page 10)

“

IT IS REMARKABLE. I still shake my head at what's been accomplished in a very short time. From my perspective, this process and this policy permits local districts to do what is right on behalf of gifted children in their schools.” That's the opinion of Mary Ruth Coleman, an investigator with the Frank Porter Graham Center who helped give birth to North Carolina's new statewide gifted initiative.

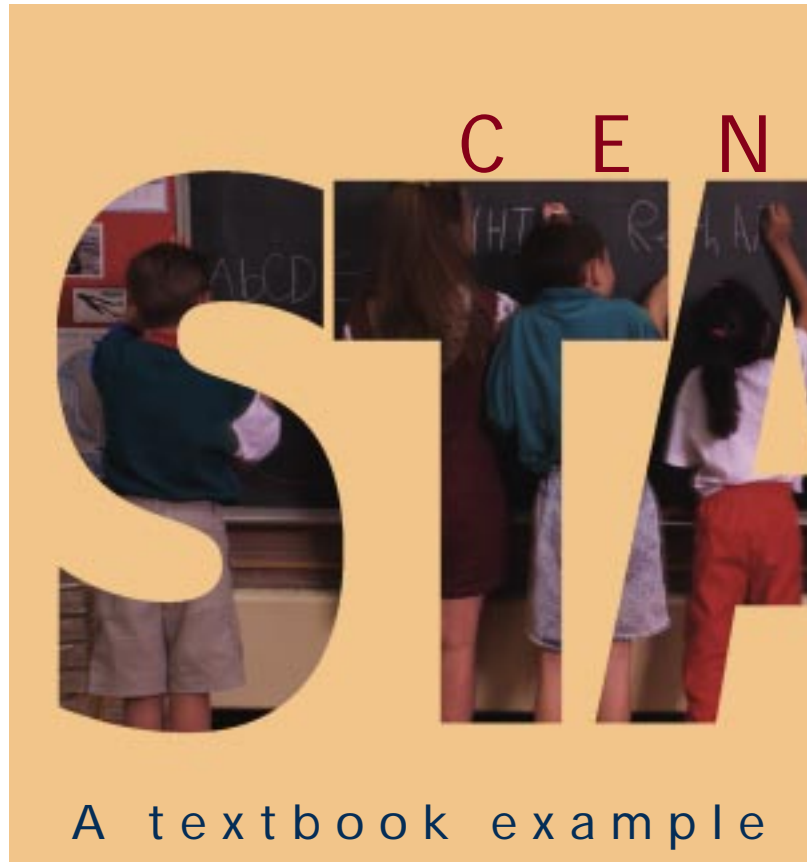
From a brand-new project scrambling to get on its feet four years ago, the Statewide Technical Assistance Gifted Education (STAGE) project completed a planning model for local school districts, developed a system level plan for service delivery, trained a statewide leadership core, designed a self-assessment program for school districts, designed and implemented a certification program for teachers of gifted children, and this year saw its results and recommendations go statewide into all 100 counties in North Carolina.

8 “It's been fascinating. And it's been exhausting,” said Coleman, who has averaged driving 50,000 miles a year for the past three years.

The movement of STAGE from an idea bounced around by members of a task force in 1993 to full-blown state policy four years later is an example of how a state education policy can be based on the best available data, developed quickly, and implemented with a minimum of fuss.

In 1993, the North Carolina legislature established a task force to consider a statewide policy on education for gifted children. Two of those appointed to the task force were Coleman and Jim Gallagher, another FPG investigator. Both are nationally known researchers on policy in general and gifted education policy in particular. Thus, the task force had quick and easy access to distillations of work by Gallagher and Coleman during their national policy studies in the early 1990s. “We culled the 50 states for the best in gifted education ideas,” said Coleman.

“The overwhelming response has been a willingness to develop a plan for gifted students that also benefits all students in the district.”



The task force recommendations included the following: creating a local planning model so that each district would have to develop its own plan for gifted students, changing state funding for gifted education, setting up a mechanism for technical assistance for the school districts, and changing the definition of gifted by using multiple criteria.

In 1994, these recommendations went to the state school board, which asked, will these work? Coleman said, “We told them we weren't sure. And the state said, what will it take to find out? And we said, time, a little seed money, people to play with, and permission to make changes. And they granted all of that.”

In 1995, STAGE asked for proposals from school districts who wanted to help develop a model and who would put \$10,000 on the table. The state Department of Public Instruction kicked in some money, expecting perhaps a half dozen proposals. Twenty-four proposals came in, and STAGE took on nine districts. “At that point, we began to take the policy from theory to implementation. Basically, we had six months to work with those nine districts,” said Coleman. STAGE developed a

model of what a comprehensive local plan should look like and began working on documentation for the state about what would happen if these new ideas went into effect statewide.



been very little rancor. The districts have stepped up in good faith. Coleman said that with a deadline to have plans ready by the spring of '98, more than two thirds of the districts are well underway. Only a very small number of districts are resisting things. For example, in helping districts begin the process, STAGE held regional conferences and of the state's 120 districts, only 8 did not participate in one of the conferences.

"The overwhelming response has been a willingness to develop a plan for gifted students that also benefits all students in the district," she said. "The plan is seen as a way to raise the expectations and thresholds for students across the board. Plus, the new identification protocol for gifted takes into account children from culturally diverse families, children from economically disadvantaged families, and children with disabilities."

In 1996, an additional six school districts enrolled and said, we also want help setting up a model regardless of what the state eventually decides.

A year later, in the summer of 1997, legislation was passed in North Carolina that establishes a timetable for all 120 school districts to create gifted education programs. "The legislation was quite specific and the language was almost identical to that we had written for the model sites. It sent us almost into an absolute panic. We went from 15 districts to 120 districts required to do the same thing," said Coleman.

She and Gallagher had been doing most of the legwork themselves, so they decided to create a leadership core across the state. The state gave additional money and the STAGE team put together a cadre of 25 people to act as planning facilitators for school districts.

Coleman described the entire process as remarkable, citing in particular the fact that collaboration was built into the policy changes from the very beginning. It was a joint effort with collaboration at many levels—the district, the Department of Public Instruction, higher education, regular education, the state legislature, parents, and advocacy groups. "When we talk about this in other states, they are just aghast that all these people are on the same page at the same time ready to move things forward," Coleman said.

Although it's been a very fast time line with a fair amount of pressure on the districts to make these things happen, there has

She said, "Another remarkable thing is that we've actually been able to unfold the program with ongoing evaluation and feedback. As we've gone along, we've been continually pushing the envelope but doing it based on feedback and evaluation," said Coleman.

In fact, four school districts were so taken with the plan that they are using it to realign their entire school curriculum from kindergarten through high school.

She said that so far the only missing piece is legislation that attends to funding. "Currently in North Carolina, if a child has a disability, a school district can draw down \$2100 in additional funds to meet their needs; but, if a child is gifted, the district can draw down only \$720. That's quite out of balance in terms of additional resources needed to educate an exceptional child."


Coleman cited a number of factors that she said contributed to the smooth adoption of STAGE's recommendations. The major one is that there has been traditionally strong leadership in gifted education across the state, not just in the Department of Public Instruction. "Jim Gallagher has provided outstanding leadership for years," she said. "Ann Harrison, lead author on the programs for gifted students has been a major player across the state. Judy Howard has been an outstanding leader, is president of the State Association for the Gifted, and was one of the Gallagher's doctoral students. Linda Robinson came to STAGE from Virginia State and worked as the legislative liaison for the state gifted association. Linda Weiss-Morris, executive director of the state advocacy organization, has

(see STAGE, page 10)

STAGE cont'd from page 9

been a colleague and contributor. Sylvia Lewis was head of the state's Department of Public Instruction when STAGE was getting organized. "She was a visionary and her influence was critical," Coleman said. "She really pushed for model sites. She left and Rebecca Garland came on board and her first meeting was with STAGE and the nine model sites. Garland has been a godsend and pragmatic and unflappable."

With a leadership core trained and school districts well underway with their plans, STAGE is about to put itself out of business. However, members of the STAGE team are already planning follow-up studies, especially in the areas of gifted children from culturally diverse and from economically disadvantaged families and children with disabilities.

Despite her quickly aging car, Coleman said she is pleased with the entire process. She even told a joke: "After eight month or so of working frantically with us, a person from one of those first nine models said to me, we paid \$10,000 to get involved with you. If we give you \$20,000, can we get out?" 

STAGE

DEFINES GIFTEDNESS as the manifestation of ability to learn well beyond the expected level of one's age mates. Indicators are student achievement, observable student behaviors, interest, motivation to learn, aptitude, and performance.

Within any indicator, a single criterion may reveal a need for services. However, no single criterion can eliminate a student from consideration. Information from any and all indicators may be used in matching students with appropriate service options.

STAGE's team drew on Donald Treffinger 's book *New Directions in Gifted Education* to define these levels of need for differentiation in programming for local school districts:

■ Services for all

Services in the regular program should be designed to motivate and stretch all learners to reach their maximum potential and to provide a challenging curriculum that develops the abilities, skills, and talents of all students.

■ Services for many

Many students occasionally need differentiation. They may show giftedness only in one area through certain talents and/or certain abilities. Underachieving gifted students and "overachievers" may be in this category. Gifted students from culturally diverse families, economically disadvantaged homes, and gifted students with disabilities may also need the differentiation provided at this level.

■ Services for some

Some students show outstanding ability in a number of academic areas and need a strong differentiated program that provides challenging opportunities where they can pursue curriculum in more depth and at a faster pace.

■ Services for few

A few students need a highly differentiated program that might involve radical acceleration of content and grade. For students capable of working three or more years beyond their grade placements, services must be designed with transitions across grade levels.

Based on these differentiations, STAGE suggests a whole array of service delivery options for each level of school (elementary, middle, and high).

For example, under "services for some" in the elementary school grid, the learning environment might include cross-age grouping, part-time special class, and resource class; content modification might include tiered assignments, contracts, and independent study; talent development might include advanced enrichment clusters and mentor programs; special programs might include Saturday classes, fine arts activities, and Battle of the Books; and instructional strategies might include problem-based learning, group investigation, and seminar teaching.

10

more...Recent FPG publications

Playmate Preferences and Perceptions of Individual Differences among Typically Developing Preschoolers

V. Buysse, L. Nabors, D. Skinners, & L. Keyes. (1997). *Early Child Development and Care*, 131, 1-18.

Assessing the Communication of African American One-Year-Olds Using the Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales

J. E. Roberts, L.P. Medley, J.L. Swartzfager, & E.C. Neebe. (1997). *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 6(2), 59-65.

Community-Based Approaches to Personnel Preparation

P. Wesley & V. Buysse. (1997). In P. Winton, J. McCollum, & C. Catlett (Eds.), *Reforming personnel preparation in early childhood intervention: Issues, models, and practical strategies* (pp. 53-80). Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes.

Smart Start findings

Here are some results announced this year of an evaluation of North Carolina's Smart Start program in the 18 counties where the program began:

- In 1994, only 14% of child care centers were rated as "good" on a measure of environmental quality. By 1996, 25% were rated "good."
- In 1996, the research team found a significant jump in the number of child care centers (among the 91 visited in both '94 and '96 evaluations) that received a higher "AA" licensing level of the state.
- Almost a fourth of the families interviewed in 1996 said they needed parent education programs.
- In 1996, while most children were fully immunized by kindergarten as required by law, only 53% of kindergartners had been immunized on time.
- In 1996, kindergartners who had attended child care had better language, social, and thinking skills than those who did not.
- From 1994 to 1996, scores for quality care in child care centers rose as a group from 4.25 to 4.51 on a 7 point scale. Experts consider scores of 5 or higher to be good.

SMART START

tions. "We won't do the evaluations for them, but we'll help set them up. It would be a good start for some counties if they could just get an accurate count of who they're serving. But people really want outcomes. Are their children doing better? Are parents relating more to their children? These are hard outcomes to measure. And because each county sets up Smart Start differently, the precise evaluation is left up to the county," said Bryant.

Bryant said a new component of the technical assistance provided by her team is an Internet web site for Smart Start participants to swap ideas and get questions answered. "One partnership, for example, may ask us for guidance on evaluating the three different kinds of home visiting programs they're funding. We can put our answer on the web and other counties can access that. We call it our evaluation roundtable."

At the national level, Bryant said, it's not unusual to spend 10-20% of the budget of a new intervention or a new project on evaluation. "For example, if the federal government put \$20 million into a new pilot program, it would be within the realm of credibility to have a \$2 million evaluation program. We're doing an evaluation for about 1 percent of the overall Smart Start


continued from page 7

budget. We're a bargain. We're a blue light special," she said, laughing.

"Good" research is possible even through such studies as the Smart Start evaluation, according to Bryant. "The real world doesn't afford the same opportunities for control as clinical trials. You have to find ways to satisfy your needs for an adequate comparison group or a reasonable baseline measure. You can still do good research; it's just different."

Although she's pleased with how Smart Start directs local communities to play a much larger role in child care policy, Bryant said she has a lingering concern about the role of the state vis a vis quality care. "I

think there is a significant role for state government in establishing quality standards."

As for working near the often volatile timbers of politics, Bryant said she doesn't shy away from stating her opinion as long as she has the data. "The researcher has an obligation to share data, even if that means supporting a new program or saying, the research doesn't show changes as a result of a program. Program dollars should be redirected to where they'll have the most effect." 

"I think there is a significant role for state government in establishing quality standards."

Planning for Success: A Teacher's Guide to a New Planning Guide to the Preschool Curriculum
B. Hardin, L. Lohr, & Pat Wesley. (1997).
Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Corp.

The New Planning Guide Teacher Posters
P. Wesley, & M. Mathers. (1997). Lewisville,
NC: Kaplan Corp.

Relations Between Child-Care Experiences and Children's Concurrent Development: The Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study
E.S. Peisner-Feinberg, & M.R. Burchinal
(1997). *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 43,
451-477.

We are great proponents of keeping the folks who are on the front lines at the table from the beginning to the end.”

That’s one reaction from a North Carolina state administrator and policy maker after her first few months as a member of a Constituents Advisory Board to the National Center for Early Development & Learning.

While research centers sometimes have advisory boards of citizens and constituents, NCEDL is trying to get the opinions and advice of constituents from the word go. Even as investigators design their projects, input is sought from practitioners, teachers, parents, policymakers, administrators, consumer advocacy groups, and professional organizations.

The advisor quoted above is Kathy Shepherd, a program coordinator and a policy administrator in the Division of Child Development of the North Carolina Department of Human Resources. As a program coordinator, she works in early childhood professional development, and as a member of the division’s policy unit, she helps write early childhood and early childcare policy.

Shepherd is used to working in a collaborative setting. For example, she and other administrators worked closely for months pulling together North Carolina’s original Smart Start program. She has worked in focus groups and with researchers before, but has never joined the workstream at such an early stage. “It’s working out well. It makes perfect sense,” she said. “We may not understand the methodology or all the terms, but it’s given me a better understanding of research. And it’s a two-way street. I think the researchers are learning from us about what the field needs in terms of information and how to share that information in effective ways.”

Pam Winton, who directs the Research to Practice Strand of NCEDL and who set up this particular advisory board, said the goals of constituent involvement are to:

- ensure that project activities reflect the needs and priorities of the groups who ultimately might use the information generated by the center’s research;
- enhance the contextual validity of the center’s efforts;
- create a shared sense of ownership and support of the center’s work; and
- provide guidance for mechanisms by which information can be disseminated to inform practice and policy.

This board has nine members, including a teacher, a mother, a father, three state administrators, a day care administrator, and



two day care consultants. Each NCEDL strand sets up its own advisory board, or in some cases, boards. This one organized by Winton acts not only as an overall advisory body to NCEDL, but also to the Research-to-Practice strand. The board has divided itself into several smaller groups to focus on such responsibilities as providing input on the context and format of policy briefs, developing guidelines for increasing constituent participation in NCEDL activities, and designing components of upcoming national surveys.

As more programs are established for early childhood and early child care, there is an increasing need for not only policy evaluation, but also for accurate ways to assess programs, and this is where constituent advisors can shine. Shepherd said,

“We’re outcomes oriented. We want to know if we’re really making a difference. Program people tend to be more subjective than objective, and we need the researchers to keep us on track. So that we have actual evidence and proof of something when we say it.” She said, “We welcome research. Research is the basis of everything if we are ever going to make a difference.”

Constituent feedback allows researchers to get a feel for how practical and relevant their research can be.

For example, North Carolina state government this year created a new licensing system designed to make it easier for parents to rate child-care centers. The system took into account research that shows well-trained staff make a difference; therefore, the new license emphasizes training.



Researchers at National Center for Early Development & Learning open their doors to get opinions and advice from constituents

Sue Fleming-Hansen is another NCEDL advisory board member. She is executive director of Child Care Resource & Referral of Wake (NC) County, a private, non-profit United Way agency. It is her first time to work in an advisory capacity with a research group. She said, "It really helps someone out there in the field to see the process that research goes through to reach the outcomes they do."

Fleming-Hansen said she sees an increasing need for quality child care services and that is why collaboration between groups such as

hers and research centers such as NCEDL is of great importance. "I would absolutely recommend this type of advisory board to other research groups. Research is a long, difficult process, and it's nice for researchers to know that what they do is appreciated by those working in the field," she said.

She feels the ideas and suggestions from the advisory board are being taken seriously by NCEDL. In fact, Winton, who said she is pleased at the energy, the level of sophistication and the seriousness

(see DOORS, page 15)

13

Recognizing dedication

Two strand directors for the National Center for Early Development and Learning have recently been honored for their contributions to children and families.



◀ Jim Gallagher, who directs the Policy Studies strand, has been named the 1997 recipient of the Distinguished Service Award given by the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

Gallagher, former director of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, is receiving the award for his "distinguished service to the organization and to the needs of the gifted and talented children of the world for more than a decade."

Pam Winton, who directs the Research-to-Practice strand of NCEDL, has received the 1997 Distinguished Services Award from The Arc of Durham (NC) County for her "outstanding contributions to impact rights and services of persons with developmental disabilities." ▶



Briefly speaking

Policy briefs synthesize research and policy issues

Too often, policy makers, administrators, agency personnel, and practitioners must make decisions about practices without knowing the full range of research or policy issues. Timely reviews may not be available or easily accessed and traditional literature reviews are often long and written in academic prose. This results in few articles being read by practitioners or policy makers.

Recognizing the need for a shorter, clearer synthesis of research, the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) has set in motion a series of *Early Childhood Research and Policy Briefs*. "Much of the information that decision makers read is from organizations with a focus on a particular age group, population, or type of service, or advocacy groups with particular philosophical orientations," says Don Bailey, director of NCEDL. "We feel an important role of a national center is the objective synthesis of research information and policy issues around topics of national importance, and the dissemination of those findings in an easily readable and accessible format."

NCEDL is publishing a policy brief each quarter. The first is "Quality in Child Care Centers" with John Love of Mathematica Inc. as the primary author. Love is also an NCEDL research partner. The four-page brief summarizes current quality care studies, recommends specific areas of needed research, and makes policy recommendations. A one-page "fact sheet" complements the brief for even quicker reading and easy dissemination.

Bailey said topics for the briefs are issues of national importance for which "we already have sufficient data or which are based on work recently done by national center investigators or affiliates, such as our research partners." The briefs are not advocacy documents, but rather are intended to be balanced descriptions of issues, what is known about them, and recommendations for both policy and research.

For example, the quality care brief makes these recommendations for policy changes:


- Strengthen standards and regulations for child care programs.
- Require initial and ongoing training for staff working in child care programs.
- Find ways to recruit and retain more highly educated and skilled staff.
- Continue efforts to inform parents about the importance of quality child care and its effects on children.
- Identify ways to support the costs of high quality child care.

The second policy brief is being written by Dick Clifford of the Frank Porter Graham Center and Gwen Morgan of Wheelock College. Clifford is also associate director of NCEDL. The brief is focusing on state regulation of child care, a hot topic in many states this year.

Upcoming topics include infant/toddler childcare practices and kindergarten transitions. Some briefs will be linked to NCEDL synthesis conferences and to the release of new NCEDL national survey data.

Each brief goes through a lengthy and careful review process to ensure an accurate synthesis of what is known about a topic and a balanced rendering of the issues. Drafts of each brief are reviewed by all NCEDL investigators, research partners, the Constitu-

ent Advisory Board, and staff of the Early Childhood Institute and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (U.S. Department of Education).

Briefs are printed by the Early Childhood Institute and dissemination is by the institute and through NCEDL's own distribution system. Briefs are also posted on the NCEDL web site, which is <www.fpg.unc.edu/ncedl/ncedl.html>. 



A one-page *Fact Sheet* complements the *Quality Care Brief* providing key points for even quicker reading and easy dissemination

DOORS

her board shows, routinely informs the group, in writing, about what has become of their ideas and if they are being used.

A constituent advisory board is also an opportunity to let researchers know they haven't missed some fine point in setting up their research. More importantly, having constituent feedback allows researchers to get a feel for how practical and relevant their research can be. As Fleming-Hansen said, "We've been there; we've done that. We know the kind of information that we need to be effective in making changes."

There has been another positive link established. Winton and NCEDL researcher Dick Clifford have been named board members of the NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, an advisory body to the state. Shepherd said, "It became clear to us in the Division of Child Development that your center and your researchers are links that we want to maintain."

It is important that those links go both ways. Membership on state and local advisory boards provide researchers with yet another way to ground research in the everyday world of childcare practice.

There is growing interest across the country in learning more about constituent participation in the research process. An intensive half-day session on participatory action research has been planned for

the Annual Division of Early Childhood Conference this fall in New Orleans by NCEDL research partner Ann Turnbull and Winton in conjunction with Pat Snyder, DEC Research Committee chair.

This session includes researcher-constituent teams from around the country who have formed collaborative research partnerships in different contexts. Strategies and information about the costs and benefits of constituent participation in research are on the agenda. Panelists include Don Bailey, NCEDL director, and Naomi Karp, director of the U.S. Department of Education Early Childhood Institute. 

A constituent advisory board is also an opportunity to let researchers know they haven't missed some fine point in setting up their research.

FPG WEBSITES

The online version of this issue of *Early Developments* contains a list of selected child care policy publications by staff at the Frank Porter Graham Center. The FPG home page is located at www.fpg.unc.edu.

In addition, four projects now have their own web sites, which may be of interest to early childhood policy makers, practitioners, parents, teachers, and administrators.

NCEDL

www.fpg.unc.edu/NCEDL/NCEDL.htm

This is the home page of the National Center for Early Development & Learning.

NEC*TAS

www.nectas.unc.edu/

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System works with the U.S. Department of Education to help states, territories, and communities implement programs and develop services for young children with disabilities and their families.

ECRI-SU

www.unc.edu/depts/ecri/

An article about the Early Childhood Research Institute on Service Utilization begins on page 4.

ECRII

www.inform.umd.edu/EDUC/WWW/Depts/ecrii

The Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion is a five-year project to study comprehensively the inclusion of preschool children with disabilities in settings with typically developing children.

Research spotlight

Recent findings at FPG

Developmental growth curves of preschool children with vision impairments

Deborah Hatton, Don Bailey, Margaret Burchinal, & Kay Alicyn Ferrell.

Child Development, 64(5), 788–806.

This study examined the extent to which etiology, amount of vision, and co-occurring disabilities affect the developments of young children with visual impairments. Growth curve analysis was based on 566 assessments with the Battelle Developmental Inventory (BDI) to describe the development of 186 children, ages 12–73 months, with vision impairments.

Developmental patterns varied markedly among the children, with part of that variability related to co-occurring disabilities and amount of functional vision. Children with co-occurring disabilities—in this case, mental retardation or developmental delay (MR/DD)—had lower developmental age scores and slower

rates of growth for overall development and in all domains—personal-social, adaptive, motor, communication, cognitive.

Visual function of 20/800 or worse was associated with significantly lower developmental ages across time on all domains measured by the BDI and with slower rates of growth in the personal-social and motor domains. The distinct divergence of developmental trajectories of children whose visual function was 20/500 or better from those of children with 20/800 or worse suggests that the level of visual function that inhibits typical development, as measured by the BDI, is in the 20/500 to 20/800 range. Amount of functional vision and MR/DD did not

interact, indicating that these 2 factors had additive, not multiplicative, effects on development during early childhood.

This article represents a comprehensive study of early development of children with vision impairment and is the first to identify the level of vision impairment that really begins to affect children's development. The study provides important baseline data against which future intervention efforts can be more appropriately evaluated.

Early Developments
Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center
CB# 8185, UNC-CH
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8185

Check here and return if you would like to be removed from our mailing list.

Address service requested

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit 216
Chapel Hill, NC
27599-1110