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Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

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Research
around
the globe

Field Notes

This issue of *Early Developments* highlights the diverse cross-cultural projects and global research, training and technical assistance projects of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Our major challenge was tracking down some researchers, who were hard at work overseas.

For example, Mark Wolery, an FPG investigator and director of Early Childhood Research for our Family and Child Care Program, returned just at deadline from a conference in Kazakhstan. He said he received a warm and enthusiastic reception, adding, "That's an amazing society." He also said the meeting was held not far from where the Soviets had tested a large number of aboveground and atmospheric nuclear devices. "So there were a lot of negative health effects as a result of that." Other FPG researchers in countries that had been part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics also report eager receptions of their work.

In other news, leading child development researchers from around the nation last fall attended the first synthesis conference of the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), administratively based at FPG. This was a working conference with the topic "Research into Practice in Infant Toddler Care." Authors of ten papers, with subjects ranging from cognitive development to respiratory disease, presented summaries and answered questions during the Chapel Hill meeting. Conference organizers Thelma Harms and Debby Cryer divided those attending into groups that synthesized each paper's implications for practice, policy, personnel preparation, and research. Papers and synthesis work will be published in a book by Brookes Publishing. A book for practitioners is also planned. The second NCEDL synthesis conference was scheduled this winter in Charlottesville, VA, with the topic "Research on the Transition to Kindergarten."

—Loyd Little
editor

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early Developments

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From the director's office

Our world view

IN RECENT YEARS I HAVE HAD THE HONOR AND PLEASURE of visiting such diverse countries as Sweden, Portugal, Russia, and India. These visits, and the ensuing discussions with parents, practitioners, and faculty, have helped me to see issues related to child development, child care, and early intervention from a different perspective. Culture and history are indeed powerful influences, shaping child-rearing practices, expectations for children, and views about the role and importance of agencies and programs in the lives of children and families.

You don't have to go to India, however, to experience diversity. Our own country is made up of individuals from different parts of the world with wide variations in languages, customs, and beliefs. How our systems of child care and early intervention address this diversity is a critically important topic for research and for practice.

In this issue of *Early Developments*, we highlight some of our efforts to study children and families from diverse cultures and to provide information and materials in different languages. Although we have done a lot, it seems to me that we are still just beginning. Ultimately we must develop models of service that are accessible and acceptable to persons from diverse cultures. We must also begin during the earliest years to identify and use strategies that will maximize the likelihood that children will recognize and respect the diversity that will always be characteristic of our society.

—Don Bailey

Bailey is director of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center and holds academic appointments in both the School of Education and the School of Medicine at UNC-Chapel Hill.

TAKING Technical assistance ON THE ROAD

INVESTIGATORS FROM the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill are involved in projects from Singapore to Russia as part of the center's increasing role in global training and technical assistance.

FPG began technical assistance programs in the early 1970s and, by 1984, the center had worked with more than 530 local programs throughout all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and six US territories. In the late 1970s, the center began the first of many projects involving technical assistance in Latino communities and, later, in Native American communities.

By the early 1990s, FPG's researchers were at work in the Peoples Republic of China, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union. For example, in 1995 Shelley deFosset and Pat Trohanis began working with the privately financed Step By Step program which was aimed at creating early childhood education demonstration projects initially in 17 emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Step by Step founder and sponsor, George Soros, through his Open Society Foundation, wanted to create a childhood education project that would

ultimately lead to a new participatory citizenry beginning with the youngest members of society, its children. Educators and parents in the countries involved have been enthusiastic—and, by the end of the second year, Step by Step was in 1,500 classrooms serving over 37,500 children and families. Most countries have been successful in getting local funding for the programs.

Though a subcontract with Children's Resources International of Washington, DC, which is the Open Society's technical assistance arm for the Step by Step project, deFosset and Trohanis have hosted two groups of Russian teachers and administrators in the United States, and deFosset estimated that she's visited Russia "16 or 17" times. While in the US, Russians received training and visited numerous preschool programs. "When we're in Russia, we do training in the cities—the project has grown to 12 cities in Russia—and then we visit programs and provide feedback on existing programs," said deFosset.

The reception of both those visiting the US and of the US team visiting Russia has been "absolutely spectacular," said deFosset. "There has been an incredible celebration



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Step by Step

Some aspects of the Step By Step program

- ▲ active choice by children,
- ▲ participatory learning through play and discovery,
- ▲ negotiation of learning opportunities with other children,
- ▲ teaching assistants in the classroom,
- ▲ teachers as facilitators,
- ▲ lowering of the adult-child ratios by using assistant teachers, many of whom are parents,
- ▲ parent activity rooms at each school, and
- ▲ parent advisory committees participating in the decision-making process.

of the project as well as the sharing of ideas. Families love the program. They are very excited. One reason is that it fits with the Russian philosophy of supporting children and families very closely.”

Originally, the program was set up for teaching children three to seven years old. Now, it has been expanded upward to include the third grade. “It’s moving up in grades, across the cities and across the countries,” deFosset said. The program is also expanding around the world. It now includes South Africa, Georgia, and Haiti.

Soros is a self-made billionaire, who is a native of Hungary and now a naturalized American citizen. In the fall of 1997, he pledged to give an additional \$500 million to Russia aimed at health, social, and civic programs. 



WHERE THEY WENT...

A glimpse at some of the work being done by FPG researchers around the globe—

A RECENT US/RUSSIAN COLLABORATIVE project is “Special Education and Social Work Services for Children with Disabilities and Their Families,” funded by the International Research and Exchange Board. FPG’s Rune Simeonsson and Irene Zipper visited Saratov, Russia, on two occasions and helped arrange for Russian faculty to visit the US with the goal of learning about various perspectives on the education and intervention with children with disabilities.

In another project, Simeonsson and three other FPG researchers took part in a university training project in Portugal funded by the European Union from 1995 to 1997. The program was aimed at helping Oporto University establish a graduate program in early intervention and family support. Each FPG researcher taught the equivalent of a semester’s course in one week of intensive training. They also worked with university faculty to adjust and institutionalize the course into their training program. In addition to Simeonsson,

Don Bailey, Pam Winton and Mark Wolery from FPG participated in the training.

FPG researcher Thelma Harms spent part of last fall in Singapore where she was a keynote speaker and presented workshops for the Association for Child Care Educators. (Her visit, by the way, came during the extra heavy haze and smog caused by extensive forest fires in Indonesia. She reports that the haze was so thick it closed Indonesian and Malaysian airports and sent many Singaporeans to hospitals with respiratory problems.)

Harms keynoted at the Quality '97 Conference in Gothenburg, Sweden, last fall. While there, she lectured at Gothenburg University and consulted with the research team that uses the Swedish version of the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* (ECERS) in research on early childhood education in Sweden. Harms is one of the authors of ECERS.

In the fall of 1997, FPG investigator Mark Wolery presented a paper on “Social and Public Policy for the Care of Children with Mental Retardation” before the Kazak American Scientific Practical Conference in Kazakhstan. Wolery also visited programs for children in the city of Semipalatinsk, giving feedback and consultation.

On the Indian subcontinent, FPG continues to expand its interna-

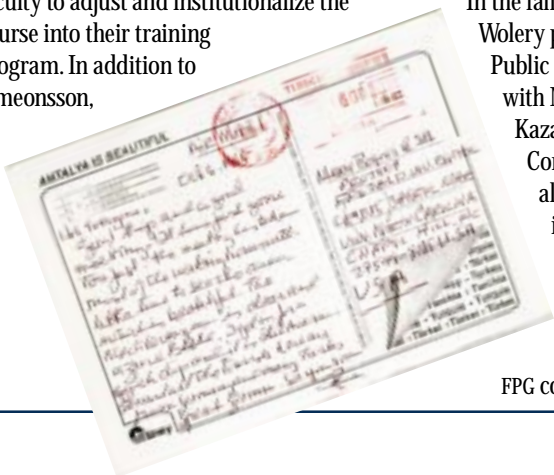
tional collaborations by sharing in a five-year grant funded by the US Indian Fund for Cultural, Educational, and Scientific Cooperation and involving three coordinating agencies: the National Institute for the Mentally Handicapped (NIMH) in Secunderabad, India; the US Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families; and FPG. The purpose of the project is to develop and evaluate a community-based program of supports for families of persons with mental retardation living in a large urban area of India.

FPG investigators act as consultants and collaborators on the project, assisting with instrument development, program design, and evaluation. Each year either faculty from

...WHAT THEY DID

UNC-CH visit India or faculty from India come here. Collaborators from FPG are Bailey, Debra Skinner, and Rune Simeonsson. Collaborators from India include Dr. Reeta Peshawaria and Dr. D.K. Menon. Dr. Peshawaria is a clinical psychologist at NIMH and is principal investigator on the grant. Dr. Menon is director of the NIMH.

Don Bailey went to India in 1996 at the request of the NIMH and the US Embassy to help prepare the proposal, and in March of 1997, Drs. Menon and Peshawaria visited FPG to continue planning. Bailey and Skinner visited India in January, 1998.





Thinking globally

Collaborative research with other countries means far more than speaking the same languages. In order to get credible results across cultures, we must be certain our assessment tools are measuring the same thing from nation to nation.

In other words...

ARE WE COMPARING APPLES AND MANZANAS?

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FPG RESEARCHERS HAVE JOINED the European Child Care and Education Study (ECCE) in the International Child Care and Education Study (ICCE), the first phase of which examined this very question.

The overall study is longitudinal and is analyzing the relationship between quality child care and child outcomes. However, the first phase was to see if two widely used scales in the US — the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* (ECERS) and the *Caregiver Interaction Scale* (CIS)—could be used with accuracy in other countries. These process elements were examined: safe care, healthful care, developmentally appropriate stimulation, positive interactions with adults, individual emotional growth, and promotion of positive relationships with other children.

Conducted in Austria, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and the US, the study found that the psychometric characteristics of the two instruments were generally acceptable across the countries involved.

In addition, the researchers identified differences between the countries in process quality and were able to explain the details of these differences. For example, in examining the mean ECERS scores, it was found that Austrian and German child care settings scored highest. These two countries are generally assumed to have stronger infrastructures for the support of high quality early childhood education services. Also, they have a tradition in

which physical space is arranged for children's free choice and exploration rather than emphasizing group activities. Personal care and play-oriented activities in small groups as well as individual play are emphasized.

On the other hand, in Spain, the country that scored lowest on the ECERS, a more traditional school-oriented approach is used with an emphasis on teacher-directed classroom work that includes the whole group, while free play and individualized work of children are less emphasized. It should be noted that differences in ECERS scores were smaller than expected, considering the variation in the early childhood systems.

Various countries may emphasize different aspects of process quality as they create their early care and education programs. These different emphases help explain the relatively similar ECERS means that were found. For example, the US tended to score higher on ECERS space and materials items than did other countries, but lower on items related to personalized care. Portugal, however, appears to emphasize personalized care but had lower space and materials scores. Across countries, the overall pattern for how the two instruments related to one another was relatively similar. These results indicated that the instruments had very similar properties when used in different countries. Internal consistencies were generally high.


In regard to the CIS scales, significant national differences were found only for the Sensitivity subscale, with Austria and Spain scoring higher than the US. However, even these differences were small. In all countries observed, CIS scores indicate that adults generally displayed high levels of sensitivity, acceptance, and involvement in their interactions with children.

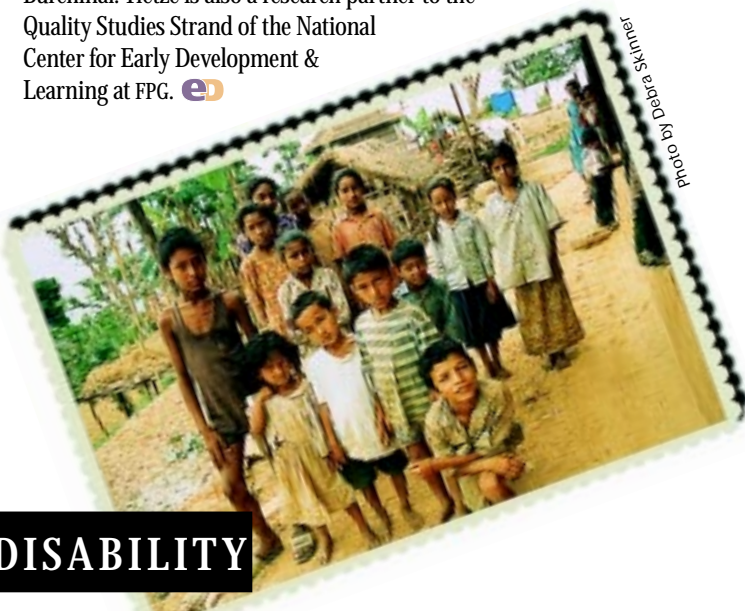
This initial phase of the larger study concluded that future analyses are needed to identify to what extent country-specific regulations and traditions determine process quality and how process quality is linked, if at all, to the development of the children served. These are issues being explored as part of the larger ICCE study.

Debby Cryer, an investigator with FPG and one of the researchers involved in the study, said that during the next phase investigators are following the children into grade school. "What we are looking for is the relationship between the quality of early childhood education that the children received and the developmental outcomes," she said.

The ICCE study is coordinated by Dr. Wolfgang Tietze of the Freie Universitat Berlin, Germany. The research reported for the United States is part of the larger Cost, Quality and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Study, conducted by teams at the Frank Porter Graham Center, the University of Colorado at Denver, the University of California at Los Angeles, and Yale University.

The ECERS scale was authored by Thelma Harms and Dick Clifford, two FPG investigators. In fact, Harms and Clifford worked with researchers from the European countries to adapt the ECERS for the

ICCE study. In addition to Cryer and Clifford, other FPG investigators involved in the study are Ellen Peisner-Feinberg and Margaret Burchinal. Tietze is also a research partner to the Quality Studies Strand of the National Center for Early Development & Learning at FPG. 



CULTURAL CONCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY

CONCEPTS OF DISABILITY are culturally as well as biologically constructed. The study, *Perceptions of Health, Disease, and Disability in Nepal: Implications for Early Intervention*, explored those concepts in urban and rural Nepal from the perspectives of anthropology, public health, child development, and special education in order to identify and define the need for early intervention services.


Collaborating with FPG researchers Debra Skinner and Virginia Buysse in the 1996 study were Cecilia Zapata of the School of Public Health at UNC at Chapel Hill and

Renu Thapa of the Centre for Educational Research Innovation and Development, Tribhuvan University, Nepal.

The project, funded by an FPG Small Grant, sprung from earlier anthropological studies by Skinner in Nepal. In fact, Skinner met her Nepali collaborator, Renu Thapa, eight years ago when Skinner was a Fulbright scholar and Thapa's sister was working in the Fulbright Office in Kathmandu.

Among Skinner's earlier works in Nepal is an ethnographic study of child development, specifically addressing how children's and

adolescents' identities are formed in changing sociopolitical worlds. She has been to Nepal six times.

Skinner said that the goals of this most recent research project, *Perceptions of Health, Disease, and Disability*, were to describe cultural conceptions of disability, treatment, and intervention needs, gather information on services available, assess early intervention programs, and initiate collaboration with Nepali researchers. She is submitting grant proposals to continue research and/or set up training and technical assistance programs. 

PARENT, PROFESSIONAL & COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Although many beliefs and practices are different from the US, Nepal offers the West some lessons, in the opinion of Skinner:

- ▲ Disability was often attributed to sins in a past life, but most parents rejected negative cultural meanings and became advocates for their children. Several grassroots organizations had been established by families of children with disabilities to provide training and therapies not otherwise available.
- ▲ Creative media programs appeared on radio and television to encourage children with disabilities to achieve certain goals, and to change attitudes among the general populace about persons with disabilities.
- ▲ Inclusion of children with disabilities in community life was the norm, although schools were just beginning to implement inclusion as a practice.
- ▲ Services were separated by disability type, but were becoming more responsive to family needs and

priorities. Although most professionals operated with limited resources, many demonstrated devotion to serving children and their families.

- ▲ Both parents and professionals recognized that they were unaware of practices that could increase the quality of life for children with disabilities. They are beginning efforts to develop early intervention services for young children and their families.

Researchers interviewed parents of children with disabilities and observed services and programs for those children. They found that both parents and professionals face challenges:

- ▲ In the harsh environment of rural Nepal, a child born with moderate to severe disabilities had little chance of survival.
- ▲ Many professionals said they were chronically underfunded, lacked training opportunities, and needed to know more about developmental disabilities.

SINCE ITS FOUNDING in the late 1960s, the Frank Porter Graham Center has included many people from diverse cultural backgrounds in its research, training, and technical assistance projects. In fact, the first major project at FPG—the Abecedarian Project—focused on early intervention for African American children living in poverty. By the late 1970s, FPG had begun involving Latino communities, and later projects embraced Native American communities. The first translations of research materials into another language began in the late 1980s.

Today, one of the larger projects at FPG is Latino Families of Children with Mental Retardation. The principal investigator is Don Bailey, director of FPG. Debra Skinner, an anthropologist at FPG, is project

“This should give us detailed narratives about parents’ understandings and experiences of disability, supports, and services, and a meaningful context for interpretation of other data,” Skinner said.

Culture is a critical component of this project because the definitions of appropriate treatment and success in treatment vary in part as a function of cultural factors, said Bailey. Also, the documented underuse of services by individuals from some ethnic groups means that professionals need to know why these families don’t use or can’t gain access to services.

The first wave of data is now being analyzed, and Skinner said, “We

Toward a m

*One ongoing FPG cross-cultural p
incorporates ethnographic consid
factors affect the language of Afri
school years.*



Photo by Pat Wesley

director; and Vivian Correa with the University of Florida at Gainesville is co-principal investigator.

Families’ beliefs and expectations

This project examines how families adapt to a child with mental retardation, focusing on three areas: beliefs about mental retardation, its causes, treatment options, and ultimate expectations for the child with mental retardation; perceived family needs that extend beyond direct intervention services for the child; and perceived usefulness of professional and agency services.

Researchers are studying 250 parents of Puerto Rican or Mexican heritage who have a child from birth to age 5 diagnosed with mental retardation or developmental delay. Twenty-five parents from each group are single mothers. Of these 250 parents, all of whom live on the US mainland, 20 will participate in more intensive ethnographic interviews to explore themes that emerge during the initial interviews.

expect that our findings will challenge some of the previous literature on Latino families of young children. This project should help practitioners modify practices, expectations, and program policies in ways that will make early intervention and other family support services more accessible to families of diverse ethnic backgrounds.” The project is funded by the National Institutes of Health and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Language skills and success in school

In another cross-cultural study at FPG, Joanne Roberts is examining how sociocultural factors affect the language of African American children and how language skills mediate children’s success during the early school years. Funded by US Department of Health & Human Services’ Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the Spencer Foundation, this study is midway through a five-year program.

Roberts said one theory for the consistently higher rates of school

The definitions of appropriate treatment and success in school vary...as a function of culture.

failure among African American children, as compared to their non-minority peers, is that the language experiences of many African American children do not match the classroom language. Another theory is that differences in school success rates are due to differing expectations and perceptions of school success by the child, family, and school setting.

This study builds on an earlier study, Otitis Media in Children and Later Language and Learning, which examined 88 African American children whose otitis media history, psychoeducational development, family environment, and child care experiences have been documented from infancy to age 4. Otitis media is one of the most

associated hearing loss during early childhood related to the development of language and learning during the preschool years. Children attending nine community child care programs entered the study between 6 and 12 months of age. Ears were examined every other week and hearing sensitivity was tested when children were well and when ill with OME. Home and child care environments were assessed annually, and communication and cognitive skills were tested once a year.

Roberts and colleague Susan Zeisel found that OME is highly prevalent in infants attending child care and more prevalent than reported in previous studies. Data have indicated that the quality of the home and

More diverse cultural community

Project examines how Latino families adapt to a child with mental retardation. The study explores the experiences and perceptions of families. Another current study examines how sociocultural factors affect the development of African American children and how language skills affect their progress during the early

common illnesses of early childhood and the most frequent diagnosis made by physicians in young children. Healthcare costs for the diagnosis and management of otitis media are estimated at \$5 billion annually.

Appropriate in treatment cultural factors


Hearing loss and language skills

Otitis media is of particular concern to the development of young children because fluid in the middle ear can impair the transmission of sound causing a mild to moderate conductive hearing loss. It has been hypothesized that a mild to moderate fluctuating hearing loss

associated with frequent and persistent otitis media during the formative years of language learning may be responsible for later language and learning difficulties. Although many studies have supported this linkage, others have not and the nature of this relationship is controversial.

Also funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, the study examined how a history of otitis media with effusion (OME) and

child care environments mediated the relationship between OME and associated hearing loss. Children with more frequent OME and associated hearing loss tended to have less responsive home and child care environments and this association was linked to lower performance on infant assessments.

Roberts' new study picks up 75 of these children and follows them as they enter kindergarten and elementary school. 

Persistent otitis media during the formative years of language learning may be responsible for later language and learning difficulties.

Recent publications

by researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Section 619 profile, 8th Ed.

S. deFosset, & M. Carlin. (Sept. 1997). Chapel Hill, NC: UNC, FPG, National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System.

Marital conflict and the development of infant-parent attachment relationships

M.T. Owen, & M.J. Cox. (1997). *Journal of Family Psychology*, 11, 152-164.

NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. The effects of infant child care on infant-mother attachment security. Results of the NICHD study of early childcare

M.J. Cox. (1997). (corporate author). *Child Development*, 68, 860-879.

NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. Child care in the first year of life

M.J. Cox. (1997). (corporate author). *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 43, 340-360.

NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. Poverty and patterns of child care

M.J. Cox. (1997). (corporate author). In J. Brooks-Gunn & G. Duncan (Eds.), *Consequences of growing up poor*. New York: Russell-Sage.

NICHD Early Child Care Research Network. Family factors associated with infant child care characteristics

M.J. Cox. (1997). (corporate author). *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 59, 389-408.

Early intervention and mediating processes in cognitive performance of children of low-income African American families

M.R. Burchinal, F.A. Campbell, D.B. Bryant, B.H. Wasik, & C.T. Ramey. (1997). *Child Development*, 68, 935-954.

Parents as child care consumers

D. Cryer, & M.R. Burchinal. (1997). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12, 35-58.

Enriching lives through language



Providing technical assistance and training across cultures means first and foremost speaking the language, and for several years FPG projects have been translating resources for Latino families.

Most recently, Partnerships for Inclusion (PFI), which provides a variety of technical assistance to communities in North Carolina, has developed *QuickNotes*, a resource kit in English and Spanish about early childhood inclusion for child care consultants.

“We realized there were a number of communities that we needed to be reaching with our products. We saw several North Carolina agencies begin to translate some of their brochures into Spanish. Also, Pat Wesley [PFI director] lives in a small town south of Chapel Hill and was very aware of the number of Latino families moving into that area, from just over 500 in 1990 to an estimated 7,000 now,” said Sabrina Tyndall, who directs special projects for PFI.

QuickNotes is a 10-module set of bilingual information sheets, with each module organized by topic in a 3-ring notebook, contained in a portable crate. *QuickNotes* is designed to be easily copied by consultants who want to make information available to child care providers who often have questions about how best to meet the needs of the children they serve.

To translate *QuickNotes*, PFI hired Javier Sanchez, a doctoral student at the University of North Carolina, who is a native of Spain. In addition, Elia Sustaita, a native of Mexico, was recruited as editor and a Spanish-speaking review board was set up to review the Spanish version, just as the English version has an editor and a review board. *QuickNotes* was expected to have been ready by February, 1998, and would be for sale. For more information, contact


Sabrina Tyndall at 919-966-7174 or email her at: sabrina_tyndall@unc.edu.

Also, PFI publishes a 20-page newsletter *All Together Now!* for more than 14,000 early child care professionals, primarily in North Carolina. *All Together Now!* is a unique publication because it is funded by nine state agencies to address the interests of both professionals and families in the early intervention and early childhood fields. Editor Molly Weston says major articles will be translated into Spanish. Because of these activities and the growing need to communicate with Spanish speakers, Sanchez will continue as a translator with PFI.

But making a difference across cultures means more than translating materials. In partnership with another FPG project, Child Care and Early Intervention: Linkages for Successful Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities, PFI has offered training in both English and Spanish for several years. Working to improve early intervention and child care services, the Linkages project targets two North Carolina groups—the Latino community of Chatham County and the Haliwa-Saponi Indian Tribe of Halifax and Warren Counties. Project-related materials and meetings involving Chatham County's Latino population are presented in both Spanish and English. Linkages is co-directed by Virginia Buysse and Debra Skinner.

One of the biggest challenges in conducting bilingual meetings, according to Pat Wesley, is reminding English speakers to slow down and allow time for the interpreter to speak. "We now provide meeting participants and trainers with written suggestions for working with an interpreter."

A recent highlight of the PFI/Linkages collaboration was *Nuevos Horizontes: Una Fiesta de la Comunidad* in Siler City, NC, a community that has seen a large influx of Latinos in recent years. Information tables were staffed by a variety of human services groups in the area, and many of the speakers spoke Spanish. Interpreters were also on hand.

Many other FPG projects are re-examining their activities with a critical eye on cultural diversity. For example, the FPG website committee is scheduled to consider in early 1998 a Spanish version of the FPG home page on the Internet. 

QuickNotes

The modules at a glance

- ▲ Typical child development
- ▲ Developmental disabilities
- ▲ Setting up the early childhood environment
- ▲ What is early childhood inclusion
- ▲ Including children with special needs
- ▲ Health and safety
- ▲ Behavior management
- ▲ Families
- ▲ Early Intervention Lending Library Catalog

more...Recent publications

Developmental growth curves of preschool children with vision impairments

D.D. Hatton, D. B. Bailey, & M.R. Burchinal. (1997). *Child Development*, 68, 788–806.

Correlates of depressive symptoms in HIV-infected mothers with infants

M. Miles, M.R. Burchinal, D. Holditch-Davis, & Y. Wasilewski. (1997). *Journal of Family Psychology*, 11, 23–34.

Creating risk and promise. Children's and teachers' co-constructions in the cultural world of kindergarten

D. Skinner, D. Bryant, J. Coffman, & F. Campbell. (1998). *Elementary School Journal*, 98(4), 1–14.

Helping low birth weight, premature babies. The infant health and development program

R. T. Gross, D. Spiker, & C. Haynes (Eds.). (1997). Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Chapters—

C.T. Ramey, J.J. Sparling, D. Bryant, & B.H. Wasik. The intervention model (pp. 17–26).

B.H. Wasik, D.M. Bryant, C. Lyons, J.J. Sparling, & C.T. Ramey. Home visiting (pp. 27–41).

D. Bryant, C.T. Ramey, J.J. Sparling, & B.H. Wasik. The child development centers (pp. 42–58).

D.T. Scott, D. Spiker, H.C. Kraemer, C.R. Bauer, D. Bryant, N.A. Constantine, & J.E. Tyson. Possible confounding issues (pp. 156–180).

C.T. Ramey, D. Bryant, B.H. Wasik, J.J. Sparling, K.H. Fendt, & L.M. LaVange. Participation in the intervention and its effect on the cognitive outcome (pp. 190–202).

B.H. Wasik, D.M. Bryant, J.J. Sparling, & C.T. Ramey. Maternal problem solving (pp. 276–289).

D.M. Bryant, C.T. Ramey, J.J. Sparling, B.H. Wasik, & K.H. Fendt. The program development office: Structure and function (pp. 370–380).

J. Ferguson, B. Mulvihill, D. Spiker, & D. Bryant. Health and safety in the CDCs (pp. 448–459).

Initial results from an eight-page survey sent to nearly 11,000 public and private kindergarten teachers

Examining the transition into kindergarten

KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS SAY a major barrier to their helping more with children's transitions into kindergarten is that class lists are generated too late, according to a new national survey by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL).

If class lists were received earlier, teachers could more easily arrange meetings with parents and children before kindergarten begins, a recommended practice.

The 3,824 kindergarten teachers who responded to the survey were asked to select barriers to implementing additional transition

practices from a list of 16 possible barriers. The three most commonly selected barriers were "class lists are generated too late" (53%), "requires work in the summer that is not supported by salary" (45%), and "a transition plan is not available in the school/district" (41%).

Making the transition

Teachers also indicated that although they believe a majority (52%) of children experience a "very successful, virtually no problems" entry into kindergarten, a

significant minority (16%) have "a difficult or very difficult entry, serious concerns, or many problems."

Putting the puzzle together

The survey was sent in late 1996, and the data began to be analyzed in the spring of 1997. The survey provided information on the

National Center for
Early Development & Learning



relative frequency of transition practices (before and after kindergarten starts), their perceived effectiveness by teachers, strategies that teachers use, and barriers that teachers see to using effective practices.

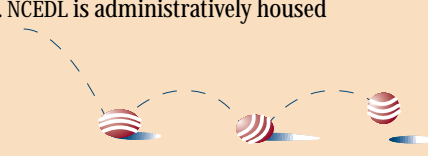
Complete results of the survey will be published later this year and will be showcased in a symposium to be held this spring at meetings of the American Educational Research Association.

What's ahead

The survey is one of five projects in NCEDL's Kindergarten Transitions strand. The strand is examining how relationships within school, home, and community affect transition outcomes for children. Other strand projects are:

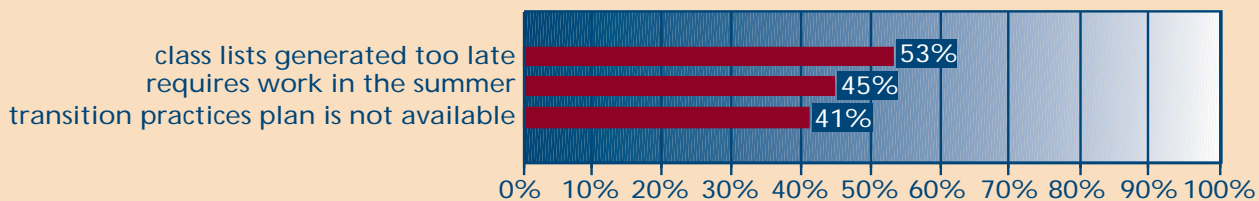
- ▲ A Kindergarten Transitions Synthesis Conference scheduled for February, 1998, in Charlottesville, VA
- ▲ A comprehensive observation of transition outcomes in kindergarten of a sample of more than 300 children studied prospectively since birth (a three-site cohort of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Study of Early Child Care)
- ▲ A study that will implement and evaluate an intervention designed to improve the quantity and quality of child-peer, child-teacher, teacher-parent, and parent-school relationships for young children at high risk of school failure
- ▲ A systematic re-analysis of existing data sets to address transition practices

Directors of the Kindergarten Transition strand are Martha Cox at the Frank Porter Graham Center and Robert Pianta at the University of Virginia. NCEDL is administratively housed at FPG.

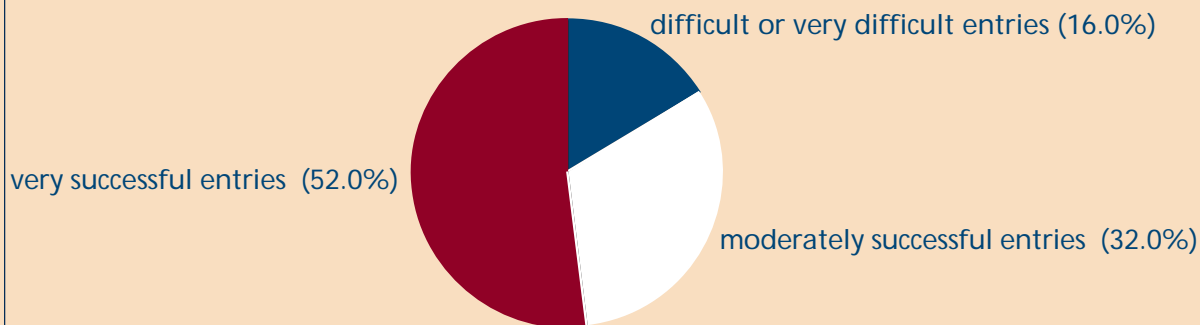


Survey results

What barriers do teachers see to doing more to help with the transition into kindergarten?

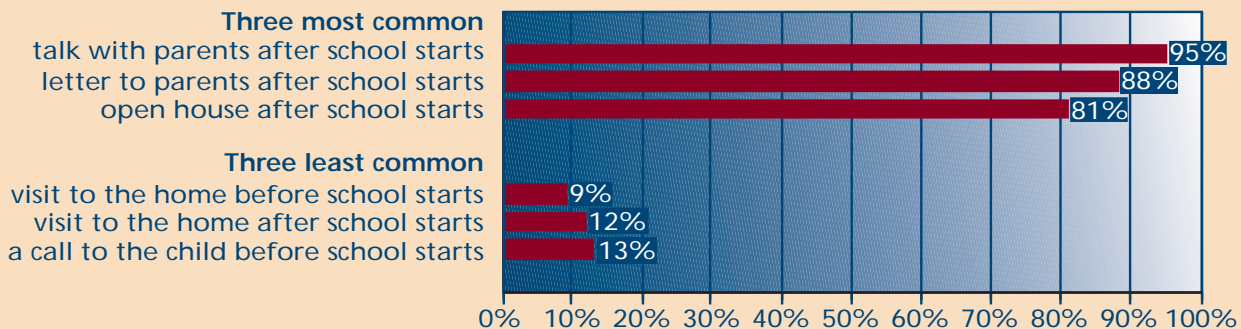


Based on your experience, what percentage of children who enter kindergarten fall into the following categories?



How are teachers helping children make the transition to kindergarten?

Of the 23 practices that were listed to help children make the transition to kindergarten, the most common ones all occurred after school had already started. The least common practices involved visiting the child's home.



New collaborative links

Working together to promote culturally appropriate training resources

COLLABORATION IS A BYWORD at the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), housed at FPG, and nowhere is that more visible than in a new collaborative link between NCEDL and a new research institute at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

The five-year institute is the Culturally & Linguistically Appropriate Services Institute (CLAS) funded by the Office of Special Education Programs of the US Department of Education.

CLAS's objective of critiquing early childhood practices and resources through the lens of cultural and linguistic diversity caught the eye of Pam Winton who directs the Research To Practice strand at NCEDL. One proposed activity of the Research to Practice strand is developing a resource guide to early childhood training materials. This would be an enlargement of an activity begun in 1987, when Winton was a research investigator at FPG working with the Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation.

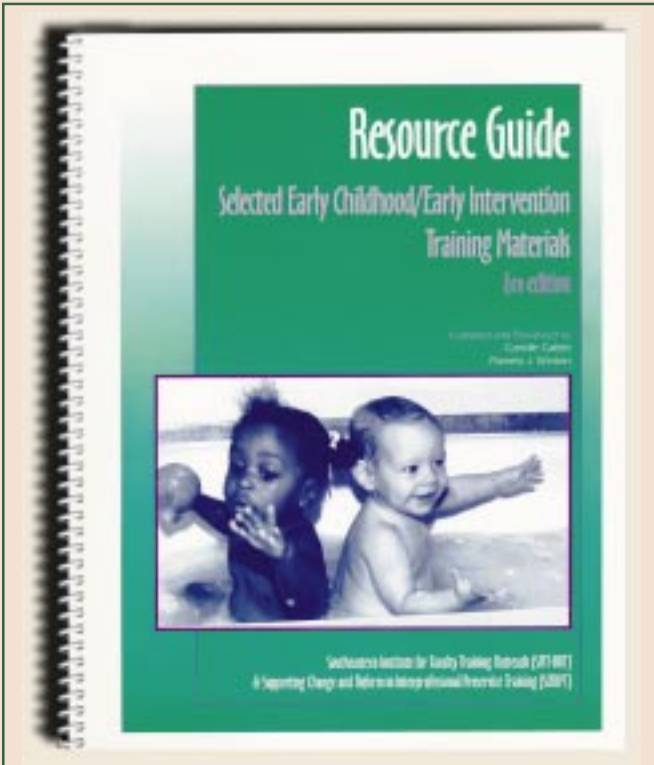
On the shelf

Winton said, "At that time, I noticed that many projects are funded for three or five years to develop useful products as part of their mission. But when the project ends, these products end up on the shelf because rarely is money or time left for dissemination. On the other hand there are many faculty, consultants, and administrators involved in staff development who desperately need these resources."

To help meet that need, she developed in the late 1980s a resource guide focused on family/professional collaboration in early intervention. This guide was later expanded by Winton and researcher Camille Catlett through the Southeastern Institute for Faculty Training (SIFT and later SIFT-OUT) and the Supporting Change and Reform in Interprofessional Preservice Training (SCRIPT) projects.

Expanded horizons

NCEDL is expanding the guide further by adding early childhood training resources. CLAS's goals include the creation of a resource bank of validated cultural and linguistically appropriate materials and documented strategies related to recommended practices in early childhood. Rather than duplicating effort, NCEDL and CLAS



The 150-page Resource Guide: Selected Early Childhood/Early Intervention Training Materials is now in its 6TH edition.

Copies are available for \$10 from FPG, CB# 8185, UNC-CH, NC 27599-8185. For questions about content, please call Camille Catlett at (919) 966-6635 or email her at <camille@unc.edu>. This publication can also be viewed and downloaded at the FPG website on the world wide web at <www.fpg.unc.edu>.

are collaborating around this aspect of their shared goals.

Winton's collaboration includes helping acquire early childhood resources and materials, identifying field reviewers and helping design their training, producing a literature review of early childhood training practices, and developing guidelines for

reviewers. Guidelines will focus on cultural and linguistic appropriateness as well as how materials reflect recommended practices.


She gives an example of how the process works. "Materials will be screened at an initial level, and entered into a database. Then materials on a topic, such as transition practices, would be assigned to two independent field reviewers with expertise in that topic. Using the review guidelines, the reviewers would not only consider whether material reflects current research and recommended practices related to transitions, but also whether the material is appropriate for all children and families. For instance, are transition timelines and strategies sensitive to the needs and work patterns of migrant or seasonal workers? Ultimately this rich descriptive information about existing products will be available to consumers."

Winton said, "We know that most product developers market their products as appropriate for all families and children; we think our process will demonstrate that this is not always the case. This will take the field to the next step of being more critical and aware at both the product development end and the consumer end.

"CLAS plans to develop materials that fill the gaps found through the review of existing materials. In addition, we hope these review criteria will be used by other national organizations, such as NCEDL, NAEYC, and the Regional Educational Laboratories, who develop products. Existing products from organizations, such as these, will also go through the review process."

Matching needs and products

She said CLAS is also acquiring grassroots products for specific needs. For instance, a community with a large influx of Hmong families may have developed materials in the Hmong language. Other communities may have a similar need but don't know where to look for existing products. An online database will help match needs and products. NCEDL will support printing and distributing the portion of the guide devoted to training resources.

CLAS will begin reviewing materials in the spring of 1998, and has asked that anyone interested in having their materials reviewed and entered into the CLAS database get more details by calling 703-620-3660 or emailing clas@cec.sped.org. CLAS principal investigators are Lillian Katz of ERIC-Early Childhood Education and Susan Fowler of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. 

Add FPG web sites to your resource list

Here are web sites of projects and centers affiliated with the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

FPG

[<www.fpg.unc.edu>](http://www.fpg.unc.edu)

This is the home page for the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. It includes each issue of our magazine, Early Developments.

NCEDL

[<www.fpg.unc.edu/ncedl>](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/ncedl)

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

NEC*TAS

[<www.nectas.unc.edu>](http://www.nectas.unc.edu)

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NEC*TAS) 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>](http://www.unc.edu/depts/ecri)

The Early Childhood Research Institute on Service Utilization is wrapping up a five-year study of federally mandated and state-implemented early intervention programs for children with disabilities from birth to age 3.

ECRI

[<www.inform.umd.edu/EDUC/.WWW/Depts/ecrii>](http://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.

MENTAL RETARDATION CENTER

[<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/mrrc>](http://www.fpg.unc.edu/mrrc)

This is the home page for the N.C. Mental Retardation Research Center, a program to advance knowledge about the etiology and treatment of mental retardation.

SMART START

[<http://instruct.unc.edu:6080/wcb/schools/5/5245/kbernier/fpg11971/>](http://instruct.unc.edu:6080/wcb/schools/5/5245/kbernier/fpg11971/)

This is a discussion forum, a virtual town hall, if you will, for Smart Start partnerships in North Carolina.

Research spotlight

Recent findings at FPG

Parents as Child Care Consumers

Debby Cryer & Margaret Burchinal
Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 12, 35–58 (1997)

Part of the Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers Study conducted in 1995 examined the views parents held about the child care center in which their child was enrolled. Nearly 3,000 parents participated by rating the importance of several dimensions of child care and rating the quality of their child's center. The quality ratings completed by parents were also rated by professional data collectors.

The results, published recently in *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, found that parents felt that all aspects of care were very important. Especially high ratings were given for the quality of interactions with children, health, and safety. Of particular interest, however, is that parents rated the

quality of their child's center significantly higher than did professional observers. The differences between parent and professional ratings were especially large when parents were asked to rate aspects of centers that were more difficult to monitor.

The findings show that parents and professionals do not necessarily agree on the quality of care being provided in a given center. Many possible reasons exist for this discrepancy. Parents may have different criteria for quality than do professionals. They may rate centers more globally whereas professionals may give different ratings to various dimensions of programs. Parents also may not have the opportunity to observe the full range of practices or may have difficulty acknowledging that they have

placed their child in a center whose quality is inadequate.

One critical component to the improvement of child care is having informed parents who can evaluate and monitor quality in their child's program. Resources are needed to make it easier for parents to meet these expectations. Further research in this area should help parent educators, resource and referral agencies, and family support groups to provide further assistance to families during the process of deciding on care for their child.

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