

FROM PROCESS TO PRODUCT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

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

early *Developments*

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**Research
to practice**

Field notes

This issue of *Early Developments* tells the stories of how some of today's projects at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center (FPG) evolved from earlier institutes and projects into down-to-earth help for professionals and families, into models for systems change, and into assessment tools to help administrators, policymakers, and ultimately, of course, children and their families. In a few cases, the chain has been direct with the same researcher(s) or group of researchers completing one study and then taking the next logical step. Such is the case with a series of projects involving inservice and preservice training of teachers, and described in an article beginning on page 8.

In most cases the connection has been institutional, with large projects and institutes creating a caldron of ideas that have spawned projects well into the future. For example, 13 investigators were involved with the Carolina Institute for Research on Early Education for the Handicapped (CIREEH) project in the 1980s. A story about some of CIREEH's "grandchildren" today begins on page 4.

A FPG project more than two decades ago about curriculum led circuitously to some of the most widely used assessment tools in America. That story begins on page 11.

So while research may be more complicated, the public outreach mission of FPG hasn't changed: Helping children and their families is still our bottom line.

In our special section about the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), also based at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we highlight one of the first national conferences dedicated to professional development and compensation for the early childhood workforce. We also look at a new product aimed at delivering the results of research faster and in an easily accessible format. These stories are on pages 14-15.

Errata: In the last *Early Developments*, a book edited by Martha Cox and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, *Causes and Consequences*, was mentioned in an article on parenthood. The full title is *Conflict and Cohesion in Families: Causes and Consequence* published by Lawrence Erlbaum.

By the way, *Early Developments* is online at our website in PDF format and may be freely downloaded and reprinted. If you want additional printed copies, they are \$1 each plus shipping costs. Please address your requests for additional copies to Nancy Pruden at 919-966-4221 or email the FPG publications office at <publications@mail.fpg.unc.edu>.

—Lloyd Little
editor

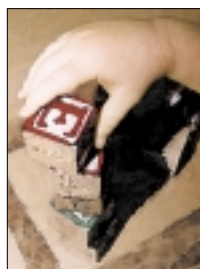
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From the director's office

The road from research to practice

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Sometimes research has immediate results that are of practical use. This is, of course, the universal hope of researchers, practitioners, parents, and policy makers. More often, however, research begins with more fundamental questions about how things work. Once we understand how something works, then we can figure out how to make it work better.

In this issue of *Early Developments*, we trace how several projects at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center began, their evolution and transformation into new projects, and the products or benefits that were derived from these projects over the years. For example, a project to create an early childhood curriculum led to the development of the *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale* (ECERS) which gave program administrators a valuable tool to help make changes in programs. It also gave policymakers more precise data to help assess the effectiveness of programs.

Another example: Early FPG research showed that individualized service plans for inclusion needed to be more family centered. That meant changes in how service providers and center operators approached such plans and that, in turn, led to creating practical models for affecting change in the education and preparation of service providers.

From our work over three decades, we have learned two fundamental lessons. First, important problems regarding young children and the programs that serve children and families cannot be fixed quickly. The issues are too complicated and the barriers to change too great. Only through sustained focus on an issue can meaningful change occur. Second, it is sometimes impossible to predict, at the beginning of a project, what the final useful product from that project might be.

The key is

- identifying an important problem,
- studying as many aspects of that problem as possible,
- brainstorming with the beneficiaries (teachers, parents, etc.) of the research about a number of possible solutions, and then
- trying out solutions that have a good chance of succeeding.

—Don Bailey

Bailey is director of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center and professor in the School of Education at UNC-Chapel Hill

Finding our way

How early family research led to practical help for professionals and families

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earlyDevelopments

The evolution of research projects to practice is rarely a straight line or a short step. For example, retreats will be held next year in Atlantic Beach, NC to prepare parents of young children to become leaders in a variety of advocacy and advisory roles with early intervention agencies and organizations across the state.

But this new practical resource for North Carolina families with children with disabilities can be traced back to institutes and research that began more than two decades ago at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center (FPG) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

ONE OF THE EARLIEST SUCH INSTITUTES was the Carolina Institute on Research and Early Education for the Handicapped (CIREEH). “It was one of four similar institutes in the nation funded in the 1970s by the U.S. Bureau of Education, as it was called then, to produce research to help in the educating of children with disabilities,” said Jim Gallagher, CIREEH’s principal investigator and also FPG director at the time.

CIREEH was one of the first large-scale research projects to examine family involvement in programs for preschool children with disabilities. The institute ran for 10 years and among its achievements are:

- research on how families adjust to the birth of a child with disabilities (they cope remarkably well, especially when they receive early help from professionals);
- the development of programs that encourage specialists working with children with disabilities to focus on the family as well as the child;
- the development of dozens of curriculum items for use with children under a year of age with various types of disabilities; and
- the creation of numerous assessment scales.

An example of CIREEH’s legacies is *Family Assessment in Early Intervention* by Don B. Bailey Jr., now FPG director, and Investigator Rune J. Simeonsson. The book, published in 1988, was an outgrowth of the CIREEH’s F.A.M.I.L.I.E.S. Project, a five-year study of families with young handicapped children enrolled in a home-based intervention network in North Carolina.

Bailey said, “It’s a natural evolution, particularly at an institution such as FPG where we have many researchers working together and in collaboration with others. Taking the research of one project and designing a more refined project to answer questions raised by the first project is a natural progression for us. And more often than not, this leads to implications and help for personnel preparation, professionals, and families.”

CIREEH’s beehive of activity also helped spawn a 1989 study by Bailey, Virginia Buysse, Rebecca Edmondson, and Tina M. Smith (all at UNC-Chapel Hill) that examined the perceptions of professionals in four states concerning family-centered services in early intervention. And that led to the development of a scale to determine perceptions of how families are included in an early intervention program or community. The scale was called *FOCAS: Family Orientation of Community and Agency Services*. Later came *Guidelines and Recommended Practices for the Individual Family Service Plan*, published in 1991 by the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NECTAS) and the Association for the Care of Children’s Health.

Family-centered practices

The work of CIREEH also led to one of the larger current projects at FPG: Latino Families of Children with Mental Retardation. “We are looking at 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

NEILS longitudinal study

The long history of the Frank Porter Graham Center’s research into family involvement in programs for preschool children with disabilities continues to the present: Today, Rune J. Simeonsson and four other FPG investigators are part of a national team conducting the National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study (NEILS)—funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education.

NEILS is a five-year study designed to provide answers to four main questions:

- Who are the children and families receiving early intervention services?
- What early intervention services do participating children and families receive and how are those services delivered?
- What outcomes do participating children and families experience?
- How do outcomes relate to variations in child and family characteristics and services provided?

More than 3,300 children and their families are being followed from 3 to 5 counties in each of 20 states. Families with children between birth and 31 months of age who are newly entering early intervention are being enrolled in NEILS. Other data presented in the fall of 1999 during a presentation at the National Center for Health Statistics’ National Conference on Health Statistics:

Categories of Conditions, Impairments & Functional Limitations

Speech/communication impairment	41.1%
Prenatal/perinatal abnormalities	19.0%
Motor delay	17.5%
Global delay.....	12.0%
Congenital disorders.....	8.9%
Intellectual/cognitive impairment or delay.....	7.2%
Central nervous system disorder	6.5%
Social/environmental risk	3.9%
Social/behavioral impairment.....	3.7%
Sensory systems	3.3%
Self-help skills	2.6%
Neurologic impairment.....	2.2%
Musculoskeletal disorders.....	2.0%
Illness or chronic disease.....	1.9%
Use of medical devices	1.4%

intervention services for the child; and perceived usefulness of professional and agency services,” said Debra Skinner, project director.

FPG’s early work with families and professionals also helped generate another project—Longitudinal Study of Boys with Fragile X Syndrome and Their Families. Fragile X syndrome is the most

common inherited cause of developmental disability, affecting as many as one in 2,500 people. Since 1993, FPG has been following selected young children with fragile X syndrome and their families in Virginia and the Carolinas.

"A pattern in this kind of research is clear," said Bailey. "Make sure we have the big picture, collect and analyze good data, postulate and examine outcomes, create and test models of change, and then figure out how to get changes that work to professionals, teachers, and families. We've been fortunate at FPG to have this continuity in our research and our researchers."

Helping parents & families

FPG's family research has led to another of the center's newest projects, the Parent Leadership Development Project. Begun in 1999, the Parent Leadership Development Project is working to develop a cadre of parents to fill a variety of advocacy and advisory roles with state and local agencies and organizations.

"Comprehensive, high-quality, individualized early care and intervention for children with disabilities now requires simultaneous attention to child development, community building, professional development, and family involvement," said Virginia Buysse, co-principal investigator along with Pat Wesley. "Families should be considered essential advisors in public policy, research, personnel preparation, and program development, as well as partners in all aspects of their children's care and education."

The Parent Leadership Project is recruiting 72 parents and other family members of children with disabilities interested in devel-

Data from the NEILS longitudinal study

Data are already beginning to flow in from the study. The first round of findings, based on a larger sample, indicate that of 5,667 children entering the early intervention system, 59% were reported to qualify for services because of a documented developmental delay, 28% with a diagnosed condition, and 13% who were eligible because of being at risk for developmental delay.


Neils data collection is being conducted by:

- Telephone interviews with families for information about child and family characteristics, child functioning, and families' perceptions of services. Families are being interviewed when their child enters early intervention, when their child is three years old, and again when their child is five years old.
- Semiannual reports from service providers on early intervention services provided to NEILS families, included information about children's transitions out of early intervention.
- One-time survey of service providers about their background, training, and the ways they deliver services.
- One-time survey of teachers about the children's programs and services being provided when the NEILS children are five years old.

In addition to Simeonsson, other FPG researchers in the study are Don Bailey, Robin McWilliam, Anita Scarborough, and Lynne Kahn.

The NEILS study is being conducted by SRI International, Menlo Park, CA.

oping or improving partnerships with professionals. These parents will receive intensive training, including follow-up activities to develop leadership skills. This cadre will then be linked to institutions of higher learning, and organizations and agencies providing early education, early intervention, and family support services.

Other major offshoots of CIREEH were a project named the Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation and a series of projects aimed at changing early intervention personnel development systems. These are discussed in an article beginning on page 8. 

If you want to know more

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Recent publications

By researchers at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

Early intervention as we know it

D. Bailey, L. Aytch, S. Odom, F. Symons, & M. Wolery. (1999). *Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Research Reviews*, 5, 11–20.

Awareness, use, and satisfaction with services for Latino parents of young children with disabilities

D. Bailey, D. Skinner, P. Rodriguez, D. Gut, & V. Correa, (1999). *Exceptional Children*, 65 (3), 367–381.

A review of interventions for preschoolers with aggressive and disruptive behavior

D. Bryant, L. H. Vizzard, M. Willoughby, & J. Kupersmidt. (1999). *Early Education and Development*, 10 (1), 47–68.

The environment and mental retardation

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Why and how working women choose child care: A review with a focus on infancy

E. P. Pungello, & B. Kurtz-Costes. (1999). *Developmental Review*, 19 (2), 31–96.

The early childhood environment rating scale, Revised edition

T. Harms, R. Clifford, & D. Cryer. (1998). NY: Teachers College Press.

The prediction of process quality from structural features of child care

L. Phillipsen, M. Burchinal, C. Howes, & D. Cryer. (1997). *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 12, 281–303.

Defining and assessing quality in early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families: Challenges and unresolved issues

L. Aytch, D. Cryer, D. Bailey, & L. Selz. (1999). *Early Education and Development*, 10 (1), 7–23.

Services for young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder: Voices of parents and providers

L. Sperry, K. Whaley, E. Shaw, & K. Brame. (1999). *Infants and Young Children*, 11(4), 17–33.

QuickNotes: Inclusion resources for early childhood professionals (2nd ed.)

P. Wesley, B. Dennis, & S. Tyndall. (1999). Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Corp.

Embedding personnel development into early intervention service delivery: Elements in the process

N. Stiffler, & N. Fire. (1999). *Infants and Young Children*, 11(3), 50–61.

Family and professional congruence in communication assessments of preschool boys with fragile X syndrome

S.C. Jackson, & J.E. Roberts. (1999). *Journal of Early Intervention*, 22(2), 137–151.

Quality of early childhood programs in inclusive and noninclusive settings

V. Buysse, P. Wesley, D. Bryant, & D. Gardner. (1999). *Exceptional Children*, 65 (3), 301–314.

Improving quality in early childhood environments through on-site consultation

S. Palsha, & P. Wesley. (1998). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 18 (4), 243–253.

Inclusive preschool environments: Strategies for planning

B. Hardin, P. Wesley, & L. Lohr. (1998). Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Corp.

Knowledge versus policy in special education

J. Gallagher. (1999). In R. Gallimore, L. Bernheimer, D. MacMillan, D. Speece, & S. Vaughn (Eds.), *Developmental perspectives on children with high-incidence disabilities* (pp. 245–261). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Policy options for early childhood: A model for decisionmaking

J. Gallagher, & R. Rooney. (1999). *Early Education and Development*, 10 (1), 69–83.

Accountability for gifted students

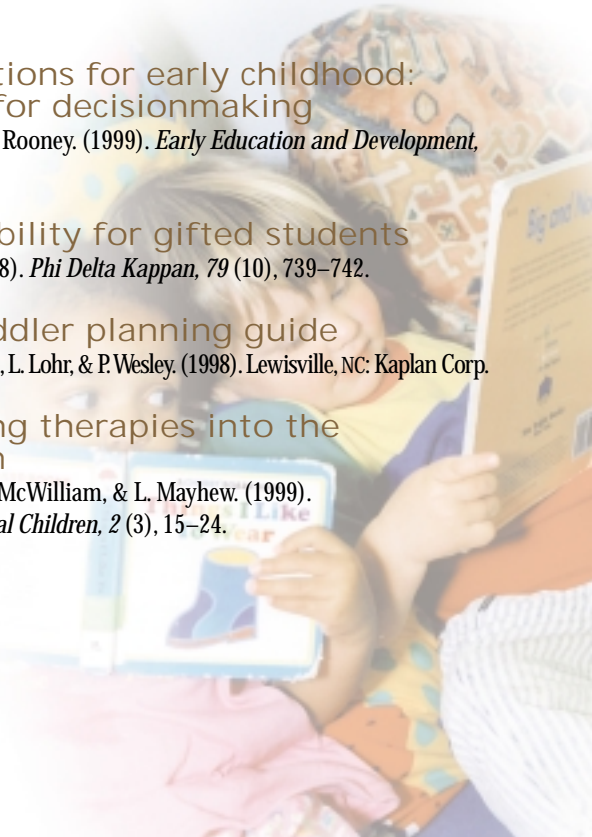
J. Gallagher. (1998). *Phi Delta Kappan*, 79 (10), 739–742.

Infant-toddler planning guide

F. Derks, B. Hardin, L. Lohr, & P. Wesley. (1998). Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Corp.

Integrating therapies into the classroom

S. M. Scott, R. A. McWilliam, & L. Mayhew. (1999). *Young Exceptional Children*, 2 (3), 15–24.



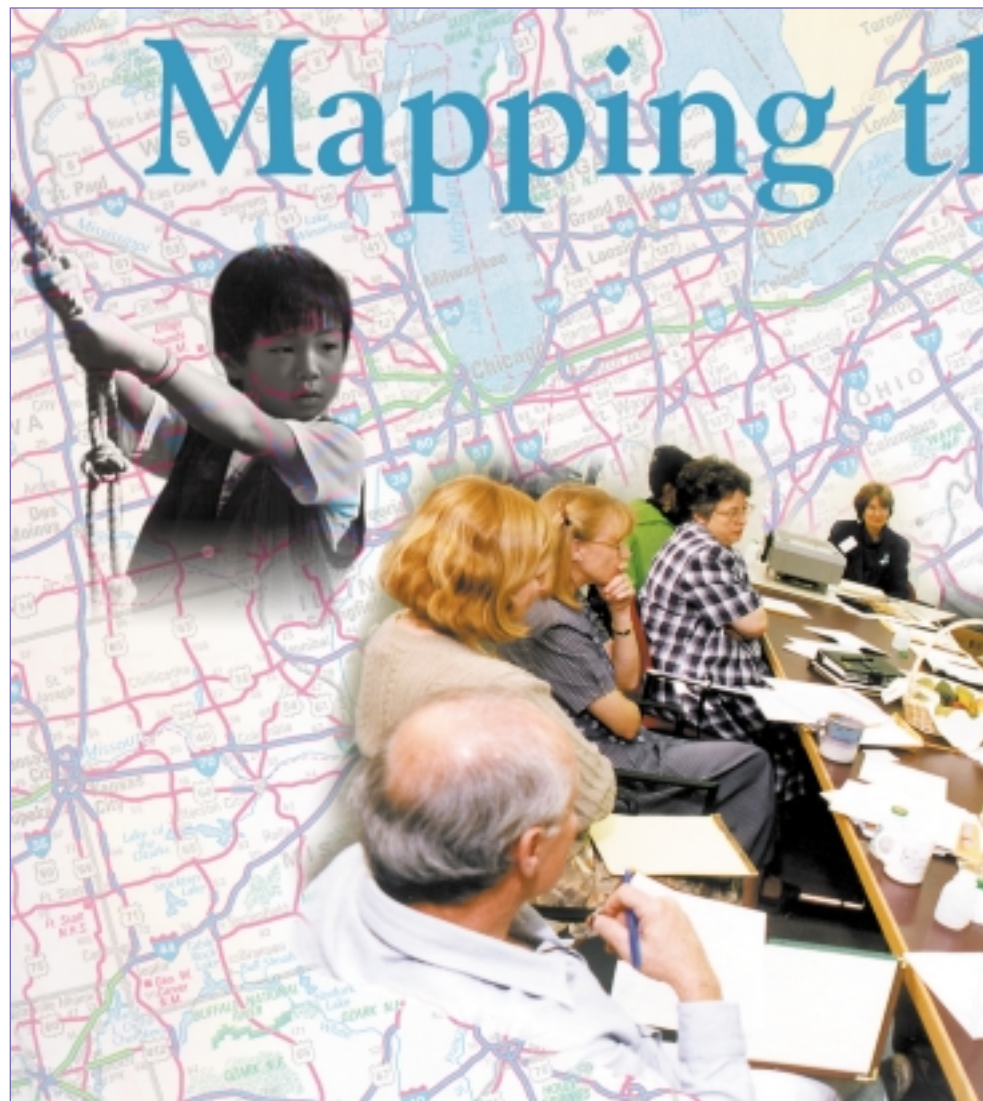
This fall, North Dakota will hold a faculty institute with interdisciplinary teams drawn from community and tribal colleges, families, and practitioners—these teams will focus on increasing family-centered and interdisciplinary practices in the preservice programs.

A group in Idaho has organized a statewide Consortium for Preparation of Early Childhood Professionals, and Baylor University in Texas now offers an interdisciplinary early intervention minor.

All of these very practical changes in how we prepare early childhood personnel have their roots in an institute that began at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center more than a decade ago.

THAT INSTITUTE GAVE RISE TO A COLLABORATIVE SERIES of projects that began changing the way early childhood professionals are trained. In doing so, researchers created new rating scales for assessing family-centered practices in early intervention, refined the case method as a way to help prepare professionals, developed models for states and institutions of higher learning (including community colleges) to beef up their preservice and inservice training of early childhood professionals, and created a model that helped North Carolina early intervention programs apply a family-centered approach.

The institute was the Carolina Institute for Research on Infant Personnel Preparation (CIRIPP), which ran from 1987 to 1992. The principal investigator was Don Bailey, director of the Frank Porter Graham Center. "With the implementation of the early intervention legislation (Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA]), we needed to take a closer look at the personnel training of early intervention professionals. We needed



to know many things: Did these people have sufficient training for implementing the family-centered, interdisciplinary approach in the new law? What was 'sufficient training'? Were our institutions responding to new needs and demands?"

First, CIRIPP conducted a national survey of college and university programs in 11 key disciplines to see how students were being prepared to work with infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Other surveys focused on barriers, models of training, com-

petencies, best practices and so forth. Some of the findings and conclusions from these surveys were:

- In most disciplines, with the exception of social work and nursing, students received virtually no information about working with families.
- Professionals consistently reported a discrepancy between typical and desired practices in working with families.
- It was clear that changes in the pre-

Over the next five years, CIRIPP faculty developed new curricula, assessed alternative instruction strategies, worked out ways to promote family-centered attitudes among professionals, created inservice training methods, and tested new family-centered systems for service coordination.

Bailey said, "Our findings projected little change in preservice programs because of competing areas of specialization, lack of faculty with expertise, and the sometimes contradictory and competing requirements of

Other research spin-offs

Among other things, CIRIPP researchers:

- developed and evaluated the case method of instruction as a supplement to traditional training of early childhood professionals;
- published a manual for workshop facilitators, *Implementing Family-Centered Services in Early Intervention: A Team-based Model for Change*; and
- developed and published the *Brass Tacks* series of instruments to help early intervention programs, teams, and individual professionals determine the extent to which their practices reflect a family-centered approach.

In the final CIRIPP report, Bailey and his team noted these implications:

- in the area of preservice, the average entry-level professional from the key disciplines is likely to enter the field with little infancy, family or interdisciplinary experience or knowledge; and
- at the inservice level, large numbers of direct service providers need training to the Part H (now Part C) of IDEA initiatives. This training must address the systems and family barriers preventing them from being as family-centered as they would like to be.

The next step

One of the 18 CIRIPP faculty members working with Bailey was Pam Winton, who took part of the CIRIPP findings to the next level. Winton said, "Our research revealed the enormous personnel challenges. What we needed were strategies and models to help personnel development systems make changes. And the biggest challenge was that there was no one 'personnel development system'."

What existed was a conglomeration of different state and local agencies, departments within universities and community colleges, and so on, that all had responsibility for personnel preparation but that didn't necessarily work together and might even be giving conflicting messages about best practices, she explained.

"For example, in one university there could be three different disciplinary departments preparing students headed for early intervention jobs; each discipline had its own



Research projects can lead to revisions in how early childhood professionals are trained

service preparation of professionals would be slow to non-existent. A mechanism was needed to promote systems change.

- Families and professionals needed to be involved in decisions about changing practices.

state agencies, professional organizations, and universities. As for inservice training, we found that large numbers of direct service providers needed training about new federal regulations. In other words, we found a major lack of collaboration and cooperation at a time when it was needed more than ever."

traditions, strategies, and philosophies about how to work with children. Working with families was not typically part of their training. The people who suffered were the families and children who relied on a smoothly operating interdisciplinary team to provide them with the services they needed," Winton said.

The answer was obvious: a major change in how state agencies and universities operated. She said, "Most practitioners did not necessarily want to be trained by someone in the 'ivory tower' who probably didn't have recent practical experience; and the state agencies in charge of inservice training did not automatically turn to universities for help for the same reason. State agencies wanted trainers who could easily relate to the daily challenges facing practitioners. To put it bluntly," she continued, "we were trying to bring the ivory tower and the trenches together, and neither side was comfortable with that. It was like trying to arrange a marriage between two people who didn't even want to go out on a blind date together."

The only way to address this, Winton decided, was to create an integrated early intervention personnel development system. That idea landed one of four regional faculty-training institutes funded by the U.S. Department of Education in 1992, the year that CIRIPP ended. One of the four was the Southeastern Institute for Faculty Training (SIFT) headed by Winton and FPG researcher Camille Catlett.

SIFT's goal was to develop and field test a model for reforming early intervention personnel development systems in 15 southeastern states. The model they developed has now been refined and replicated through three additional projects that they direct—SIFT-OUT, SCRIPT and NEW SCRIPTS. Their newest project, NEW

SCRIPTS, focuses on community colleges and diversity issues.

Putting it in perspective

To put this in perspective, since 1992 these four projects (SIFT, SIFT-OUT, SCRIPT, and New Scripts) have worked with 28 states to improve the preparation of their early child-



hood intervention workforce. Winton said, "By using a sequence of planning, training, follow-up, and evaluation, interdisciplinary teams of faculty members, family members, practitioners, and state agency representatives have created state-specific changes at a systemic level, at a program/practice level, and at an individual level."


The examples at the beginning of this article are only a few of the actual, practical outcomes from the SIFT and SCRIPT projects.

Another one of those original researchers with CIRIPP was P.J. McWilliam who took the

case method and turned it into a significant teaching technique. After CIRIPP, McWilliam directed a special Case Method of Instruction (CMI) project that expanded awareness of CMI and the availability of appropriate instructional materials for case-method teaching of early intervention personnel preparation.

McWilliam also directed the Carolina Model Inservice Training Project that created a curriculum for training early intervention teams to implement a family-centered approach in their daily work with children and families. Most recently, McWilliam is directing the CMI-Outreach Project, which is designed to help university

instructors incorporate the case method in their preservice and inservice instruction.

Bailey said, "This rolling forward of our work into more detailed and more practical use reflects one of the strengths of a large, strong research institution. These projects don't reflect so much one person following a line of research as they do the research institution and all its members building on the findings of earlier work by earlier researchers. By taking our research to the outreach stage, we show our commitment to use research opportunities to ultimately benefit children and their families." 

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Building blocks



Research that led to new quality assessment tools & changed personnel preparation programs

A 1975 project named the Early Childhood Education Curriculum Development Program at FPG is the linear grandparent of...

a project in Sweden that allows preschool teachers to analyze and upgrade the quality of their own programs;

a military family child care home accreditation program for the U.S. Army, Navy and Marines; and

a project in Durham, NC, that helps child care centers upgrade the quality of their care.

To name only a few of the “grandchildren.”

“WHEN WE BEGAN WORKING with our curriculum development program in the late 1970s, it soon became clear that we needed a way to assess the quality of early childhood programs,” said Thelma Harms, who directed that early FPG program. She and a colleague Dick Clifford went to work, and by 1980 had produced the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale* (ECERS), which has since become one of the most widely used scales to assess various aspects of quality in early childhood group care.

The ECERS was followed by three other scales, each measuring different segments of the early childhood field: The *Family Day Care Rating Scale* (FDCRS) used for programs in a provider's home; the *Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale* (ITERS) for group programs for children from birth to 2 1/2 years; and the *School-Age Care Environmental Rating Scale* (SACERS) for before- and after-school group care programs for school-age children to age 12.

Harms said that in order to provide care and education that will permit children to experience a high quality of life while helping them develop their abilities, a program must provide for the three basic needs of children:

- ☐ Protection of their health and safety
- ☐ Building positive relationships
- ☐ Opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience

"It takes all three to create quality care. No one component is more or less important than the others, nor can one substitute for another. Since our scales are comprehensive process quality measures, all three aspects are included," she said.

FPG director Don Bailey, who worked with Harms on some of her earlier projects, said, "FPG has a significant history of development of measuring and assessment tools. Sometimes researchers develop a scale just for gathering research data; at other times, the development of an assessment tool is suggested by the data. Once early childhood program directors and professionals have reliable measures of aspects of their programs, they can make changes and improvements in their programs and personnel development plans."

The ECERS and ITES were used as comprehensive quality measures in the National Child Care Staffing Study of 1989 and the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study (CQO) of 1995 and 1999—major studies on the effects of child care on child development. In 1998, Harms, Clifford, and Cryer brought out the revised ECERS (ECERS-R) that incorporated changes to make the ECERS function better in inclusive and culturally diverse settings.

ECERS has been translated into a number of languages and used in research and program improvement in many countries including Germany, Italy, Spain, Iceland, England, Sweden, Russia, Portugal, Hungary, and Canada. (See related story on page 13 about how North Carolina is using the ECERS in a new statewide rating system of child care programs.)

FPG's experience in quality care and assessments also helped create an accreditation system for the nation's military. In the early 1990s, two private foundations (Mailman and Carnegie) funded a national committee

to examine family child care quality criteria. That committee was headed by Harms and Debbie Cryer, who has also worked on measures. That led to an examination of national quality criteria for family child care followed by an FPG study comparing quality recognition systems for family child care. Eventually it led to the development of the Military Family Child Care Home Accreditation program which was completed in 1997.

New assessment tool

If there is a clear need by child care professionals in general for assessing programs, that need surely extends to early intervention programs as well. A FPG team lead by Lynette Aytch is in the final stages of completing a new *Early Intervention Services Assessment Scale* (EISAS) to examine the

quality of early intervention services provided to young children with disabilities and their families. Aytch said her team is developing a program version and a parent questionnaire.

"These types of assessment scales," said Aytch, "are valuable for a number of reasons. With accountability a keyword in government financing today, scales

are an important tool in evaluating programs. Well-constructed scales allow administrators and service providers to assess program practices, and parent questionnaires offer families the opportunity to provide input into the program evaluation process."

Changes in child care


The ECERS-R scale is currently being used by a project in Durham County, NC, to help enhance quality in child care centers with practical and professional assistance, and with money. The project is Quality

Enhancement Support and Training (QUEST) and is funded by the NC Partnership for Children, the state's Smart Start project whose mission is making sure children are ready for school when they enter the first grade.

One of the QUEST consultants is Kate Thegen, a research assistant with the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL), also based at UNC-Chapel Hill. She explained how the project works, "A child care center or a family child care program in Durham submits a request for QUEST help, and if approved, then a QUEST consultant will perform an assessment of the center, suggest changes, offer resources and technical assistance on making changes, offer substitute teacher assistance, and make grants to cover some of the changes."

The process begins with an assessment, which includes such tools as the ECERS-R. "Also," said Thegen, "our on-site consultation model is based on a model originally created by Partnerships for Inclusion (PFI)."

"QUEST is making a significant difference in child care centers in Durham and is making it on a very practical level. For example, one of the areas I've worked in has been helping teachers to understand and use the ECERS scale so they could continue using it after the QUEST consultant leaves," she said. Thegen is also a former child care center director. Programs similar to QUEST are getting underway in other North Carolina counties as well.

A related technical assistance program, based on assessments with the Harms, Clifford and Cryer environment rating scales, is now being conducted by Harms and Theresa Sull for the District of Columbia Office of Early Childhood Development. Harms and Sull have trained 25 technical assistance specialists in Washington, DC, who are providing on-site technical assistance to centers and family child care homes over the next year. A rigorous evaluation of this technical assistance program is being carried out in order to find out more about characteristics that create success in the process of technical assistance. 



"With accountability a keyword in government financing today, scales are an important tool in evaluating programs."

Quality care

In the spring of this year, North Carolina revised the way it rates the 9,000 regulated day care centers and homes in the states. Evaluations take into account staff education, center's history of compliance, disciplinary techniques, how teachers play with children, and staff/child ratios, among other considerations.

Research at the Frank Porter Graham Center was used to help develop the new ratings. Also, the fact that North Carolina is taking the initiative in upgrading its day care centers ratings can be traced, in part, to FPG research. Both actions are descendants of the national Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes in Child Care Centers study (CQO), begun in 1993, and of earlier FPG projects involving quality care.

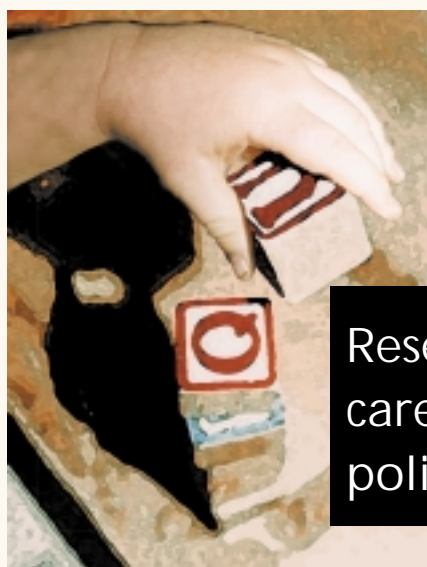
The CQO project, a collaboration of four universities, included a number of FPG researchers from the very beginning. "We weren't really sure what we would find when we began this study," said Dick Clifford, a senior FPG researcher and member of the CQO team. "This was one of the first comprehensive studies to look at our care centers and document the effects of quality child care on children's development over time."

Here are just two of the findings from the first batch of data from the CQO study,* published in 1995:

- ❑ The quality of child care is primarily related to higher staff-child ratios, staff education, and administrators' prior experience. Other factors include teacher wages, education, and specialized training.
- ❑ Child care at most centers in the United States is poor to mediocre, with 40% of infants and toddlers in rooms having less-than-minimally acceptable quality.

But the sentence in the CQO study that caught the eye of North Carolinians was this one: "North Carolina, the state with the least stringent child care standards of

the four states in the study, has the highest number of poor-quality centers." (The



CQO study focused on 400 randomly selected centers in North Carolina, California, Colorado, and Connecticut.)

The sentence was an eye-opener for many families, state administrators, and policy-makers in North Carolina. So, when the state of North Carolina wanted to upgrade its child care center rating scale, it looked at a number of assessment tools created at FPG. Stephanie Fanjul, director of the North Carolina Division of Child Development, said that if a center wants to reach the top (a 5-star) rating, a voluntary rating, it must agree to be assessed using both ECERS-R (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised) and an ITERS (Infant-Toddler Environmental Rating Scale) assessments. Both scales were developed by FPG researchers.

Don Bailey, FPG director, said, "We always examine our research for implications for public policy, personnel preparation, and additional research. It is not surprising that we are finally beginning to see changes in personnel preparation and in the regulation of child care centers and homes. This is how research ought to be used."

Head Start quality study

The same year that the first data from the CQO study came out, the Head Start Bureau decided to create a set of performance measures to provide a "report card" on how the Head Start program is doing overall. It set up a five-year project involving four Quality Research Centers. One of the four is focused on classroom quality and directed by Donna Bryant at FPG.

Research on quality care leads to policy changes

"We've added a recently developed measure of diversity to several widely-used measures in order to examine the patterns of relations among various aspects of quality, including the classroom environment, the nature of teacher-child interactions, and teacher involvement," said Bryant. (The new measure of diversity is the *Anti-Bias Environmental Checklist* created by Ellen Peisner-Feinberg, another FPG researcher.)

Some preliminary data from Bryant's project suggests:

- ❑ Different aspects of quality should be included in future efforts directed toward training of teachers as well as research.
- ❑ Both diversity and developmentally-appropriate practices contribute to the quality of classroom experiences for young children.
- ❑ Instruments to monitor quality should measure both teacher-child interactions and the physical environment.

* See Research Spotlight, page 16, for a summary of information from the latest round of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes data.

Making gains...A national conference tackles ways to improve training and compensation of early childhood workers

Two days of impassioned pleas, determined efforts, patient negotiating, listening to research data, and optimistic networking characterized a Chapel Hill, NC conference held earlier this year that focused on how to upgrade the compensation and education of the early childhood workforce.

Sponsored by the National Center for Early Development & Learning (NCEDL) and four other groups, the conference brought together 180 professionals, teachers, child care center directors, leaders of national advocacy groups, researchers, and administrators and policy makers from national and state governments.

Experts shared research and strategies that set the context for often-passionate discussions. Highlights include:

- Several speakers decried the general lack of a career development ladder for child care workers. Such a ladder, they said, should support better compensation, reward training, and create organizational roles for teachers and providers. These steps would also create a stronger foundation for more diverse leadership in the field.
- Approximately 30% of early childhood teachers leave the field each year—and research is beginning to describe the serious impact of turnover and change on young children.
- Over the years, research has shown for every dollar invested in high quality child care, there is up to a \$7 benefit to children, parents, and society.
- Rosemarie Vardell of the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW) said there is a severe staff shortage facing child care centers. Wages are low, and “the market place is not taking care of the problem.” She said that upgrading teaching requirements without upgrading compensation is a squandering of resources. “The entire child care system needs major new sources of funding.”
- Anne Mitchell of Wheelock College said subsidies to child care can take two forms: 1) portable subsidies that follow the family such as vouchers, scholarships, and tax credits, and 2) direct subsidies that go directly to the child care system.
- In a paper entitled “Who’s Missing at the Table?” written for the conference, Marcy Whitebrook of CCW wrote, “The lack of sufficient resources in early childhood settings, combined with practitioners’ meager earnings, results in limited access to professional development, participation in advocacy, or other experiences for many teachers and providers.”



Voices from the front lines were heard in a panel called “Perspectives from Key Stakeholders.” Panel members shared stories of what it means to be a teacher, a director, a parent and a college professor facing the realities and limitations created when a workforce is shackled with wages averaging \$7.50 an hour.

Six different compensation/professional development models were presented and discussed from Massachusetts, Rhode Island, California, Georgia, North Carolina’s T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps), and Canada.

Conference participants interacted as members of 21 teams—10 state teams, 10 NC county teams and one national team—all of which included leaders in the early childhood field. The teams listened to experts, talked amongst themselves and crafted plans for their teams to take home to begin to institute changes.

Conference Coordinator Kate Thegen of NCEDL said follow-ups to the

“IDEAL SOLUTIONS” —

Excerpts from notes on walls around various teams

- “Consider increasing benefits (in addition to salary) to increase compensation.”
- “Determine the ‘living wage’ for our county and persuade funding agencies that we need to pay that.”
- “A career lattice is needed.”
- “What do we do about an early child care worker who may not have the education, but has years of experience and an excellent reputation?”
- “We need to show a clear link between early child care and educational outcomes in school later.”
- “Better evaluation tools needed.”

conference include interviews with team leaders to determine progress and barriers. Information about the conference is on the NCEDL website <www.ncedl.org> and shared through future presentations, articles, and a book.


Joan Lombardi, deputy assistant secretary for children and families in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services until last year, captured the spirit of the conference in her closing remarks as "a tribute to those Americans who wake up every

morning, greet parents, hug children, change diapers, read books, dry tears, and help the country work and children thrive."



Pam Winton, who directs the Research-to-Practice unit of NCEDL, said the conference is believed to be the first such national gathering to address compensation and professional development issues for the early childhood workforce.

Other Making Gains sponsors were CCW, Day Care Services

Association, the NC Department of Health and Human Services Division of Child Development, and the NC Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development. 

New product speeds dissemination of NCEDL research information

Recognizing a need to place research results before constituents quickly and in an easily read format, the Research-to-Practice unit of NCEDL has created a new product, *Spotlights*.

Spotlights are monthly, one-page summaries of research data, presentations by researchers, and articles written by NCEDL researchers for academic journals.


Traditionally, research data would arrive in a format for public consumption after as much as a year while the material made its way into various academic journals and into often-lengthy final reports for funding agencies. "However, much of our work today is of urgent significance not only to the research community but to practitioners in the field, families, and policymakers," said Pam Winton, who directs the Research-to-Practice unit.

By working closely with the researchers involved and using an internal review system, a *Spotlight* can typically be produced within two weeks. Furthermore, *Spotlights* can be directed toward certain constituen-

cies. For example, one *Spotlights* explained a decision matrix aimed at helping decision makers/policy analysts weigh the pros and cons of various policy options for a public issue such as childcare quality. Another


Spotlight discussed diarrhea and child care and was directed toward child care workers and operators of child care centers.

Other topics among the first 10 *Spotlights* ranged from a theoretical discussion of assessing readiness of children for school, to the transition considerations for children with disabilities and their families.

The response to *Spotlights* has been quite good, according to Winton. More than 8,500 have been disseminated in paper format; many have been downloaded from the NCEDL web site, and permission has been given to other organizations to print and disseminate *Spotlights*. For example, the state of Kentucky printed 1,000 copies of *Spotlight #2* on Quality Child Care and disseminated it in a pre-school mailing packet to teachers, and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies disseminated 500 copies of *Spotlight #1* on Kindergarten Transitions to member agencies. 

Highlights from past NCEDL Spotlights

- Kindergarten teachers report that 48 percent of children entering kindergarten have moderate or serious problems.
- A three-year study showed that children with closer relationships to their preschool teachers showed fewer problem behaviors—this was especially true for boys. These children also had better language skills through kindergarten.
- Interventions involving parents and the community can be a valuable adjunct in controlling enteric diseases in child care centers.
- A common difficulty in the transition of children with disabilities from preschool programs to school-age programs is having multiple sending agencies and a single receiving agency. A recommended solution is to establish a community-wide interagency transition policy.
- NCEDL researchers are developing a new scale to assess the quality of early intervention services provided to young children and their families.

Spotlights posted on the NCEDL web site <www.ncedl.org> are in PDF format, which means they may be downloaded and printed. 

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Research spotlight

Recent findings at FPG

The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go to School—Executive Summary

Cost Quality Study Team. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, National Center for Early Development & Learning. (1999). Available at <www.ncedl.org>.

THE COST, QUALITY AND CHILD OUTCOMES in Child Care Centers Study, begun in 1993, was designed in part to examine the influence of typical center-based child care on children's development during preschool years and as they moved into the formal education system. These children have now been followed through the end of second grade. Overall findings can be summarized in a few broad statements.

Findings

- High-quality child care is an important element in achieving the national goal of having all children ready to learn when they come to school.
- Children who attended higher quality child care centers scored higher on measures of both cognitive and social skills in child care and through the transition into school. Further, this influence of child care quality was important for children from a wide range of family backgrounds.
- High quality child care continues to positively predict children's performance well into their school careers.
- Longitudinal analysis indicated that the quality of child care experienced by these children before they entered school continued to affect their development at least through kindergarten, and in many cases through the end of second grade.
- Children who have traditionally been at risk of not doing well in school are affected more by the quality of child care experiences than other children.
- For some outcomes (math skills and problem behaviors), children whose mothers had lower levels of education were more sensitive to the negative effects of poor quality child care or received more benefits from high quality child care. Moreover, in typical child care, the influences of child care quality for children at risk were sustained through second grade.
- The quality of child care classroom practices was related to children's cognitive development, while the nature of the preschool teacher-child relationship influenced children's social development through the early school years.

The quality of the child care environment affected children's cognitive development (language and math skills) through early elementary school. The relationships children had with their teachers in child care were related to better social skills (greater cognitive/attention skills and sociability and fewer problem behaviors) over time. Children's ability to get the most benefit from both their teachers and educational environments available to them in school is what readiness is really all about, and high-quality child care experiences help children develop this ability.