

FPG
Child
Development
Institute
The University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

early developments



Spring 2003 | Volume 7, #1

Professional Development

news



The International Division of Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children presented its 2002 DEC Service to the Field Award to Dr. Pamela Winton in ceremonies December 5 during the group's annual meeting in San Diego. The award was presented for her "significant contributions" and her "distinguished career as a researcher and leader in the area of family-centered practices related to both direct services and professional development."

natural resources

High-quality, free or low-cost resources related to early childhood and early intervention can be delivered to your e-mailbox by subscribing to Natural Resources, a weekly listserv. The service is provided by Natural Allies, an FPG project working with community colleges and universities to prepare personnel to provide quality services for all young children in natural and community environments. If interested, please visit <http://listserv.unc.edu/> Using the "Search for Lists" tool, find natural_resources and follow the directions for subscription.

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Supervising Editors

Pam Winton, Virginia Buysse

Writers

John Manuel

Loyd Little

Designer

Gina Harrison

Photographer

Don Trull

Assistant Editor

Anna Mitchell

www.fpg.unc.edu

www.ncedl.org

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To change your address

contact Jay Hargrove
CB #8185, UNC-CH
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-8185
Periodicals postage paid at
Chapel Hill, NC

For a free subscription

send your name & address to
Jay Hargrove
(919) 966-0888
hargrove@mail.fpg.unc.edu

To order additional copies

contact FPG Publications Office
(919) 966-4221
pubs@mail.fpg.unc.edu

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Director's Notes

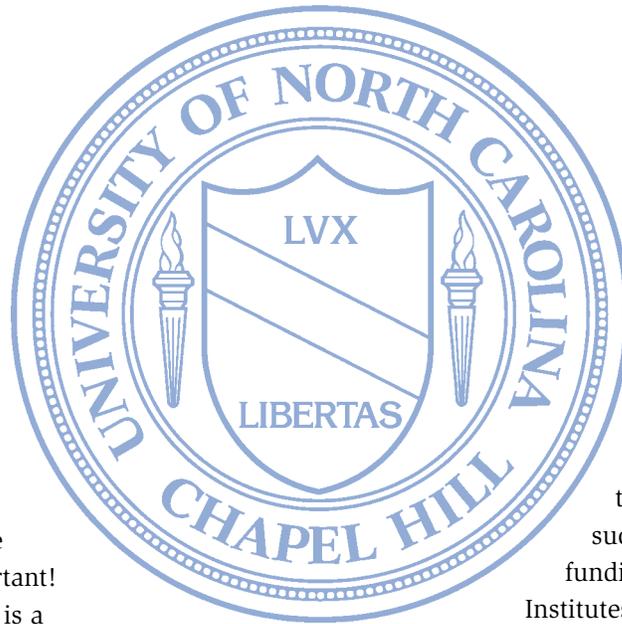
by Don Bailey, Director

THE QUESTION ALWAYS SURPRISES ME—"Is FPG a part of The University of North Carolina?" I guess some would say that being asked this question is a sign that the institute is so engaged in the world of practice and policy that it defies the "ivory tower" image of many universities. If that is the case, then perhaps we have accomplished something important! But the answer to the question is a resounding "YES!"

Organizationally, FPG is a "freestanding" institute at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. By freestanding, I mean that FPG is not a part of just one school or department at the university. As director, I report to the Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Studies. This arrangement gives us enormous flexibility in what we do and provides a high degree of both autonomy and responsibility.

Why is our university connection so important? I can think of at least three reasons. First, it provides the opportunity to address issues from a multidisciplinary perspective. When you think about the challenges facing children and families today, it is clear that they do not fall neatly under one discipline's responsibility. We are very fortunate to have investigators and fellows from many different schools, departments and other centers on campus. These include education, psychology (including developmental, clinical, school and neuropsychology), public health, nursing, pediatrics, anthropology, speech and hearing sciences, occupational therapy, audiology, biostatistics, social work, maternal and child health and psychiatry. Through these diverse perspectives we seek to integrate knowledge about children, families and systems of care so that we can better understand the big picture.

Second, a university expects its faculty to publish in the best and most scholarly journals. We want to be held to this standard, as high-quality research forms the basis for



our outreach and policy work. We are proud of our scholarly publications, many of which are listed in each issue of *Early Developments*. Although not all will be of interest to practitioners or policy makers, these publications provide the credibility for us to speak with authority on major issues of our time, and are necessary for continued success in securing prestigious federal funding from agencies such as the National Institutes of Health and the US Department of Education.

Third, by being a part of a university we have the privilege of working with bright and energetic students from a variety of disciplines. Our contribution to the university's teaching mission is primarily through providing students the opportunity to participate in every phase of research and outreach endeavors, including design, implementation, analysis, publication and grant writing. Students who work at FPG leave with a hands-on understanding of the research process and hopefully will become the next generation of leaders who study young children's development and learning and work to improve human services.

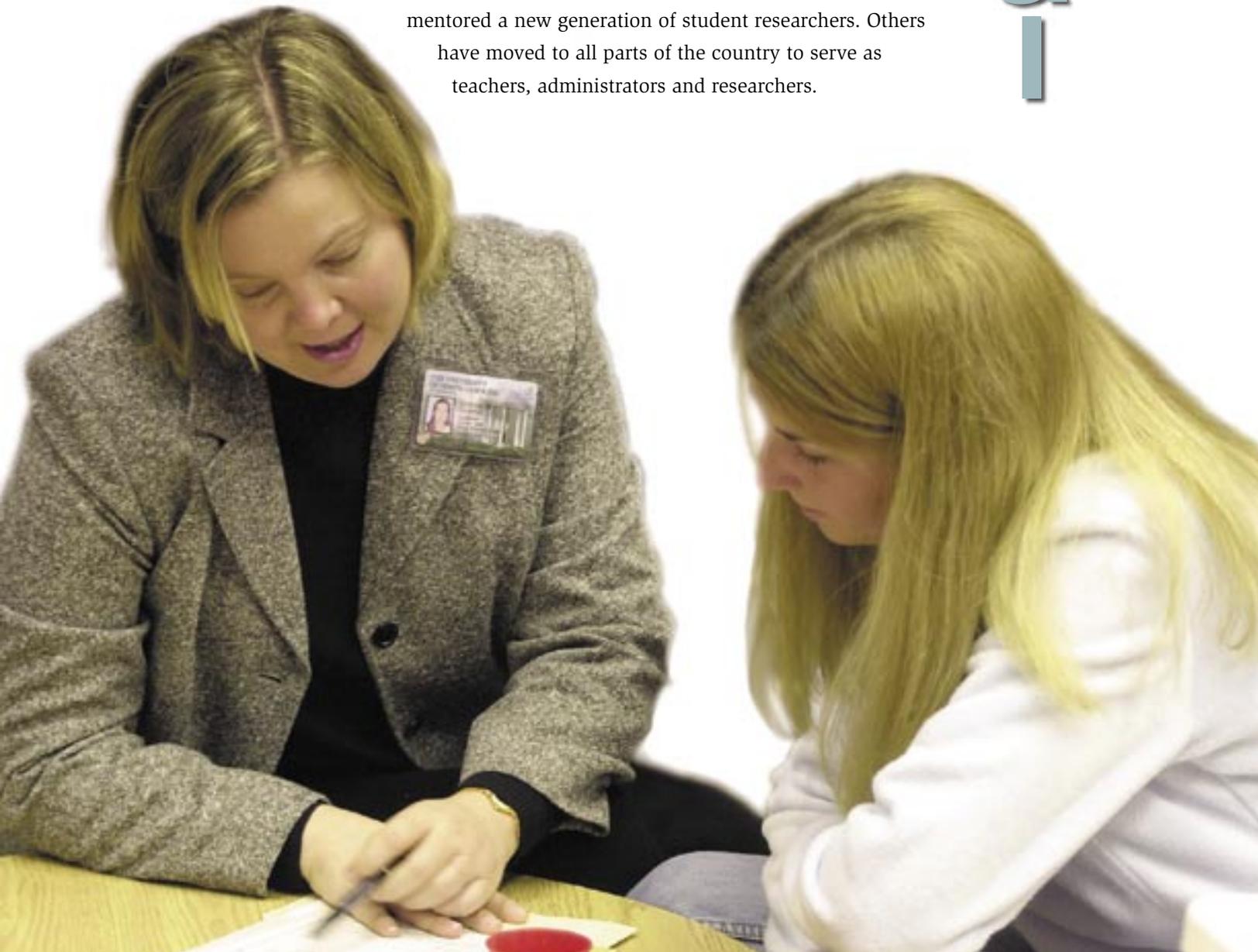
This issue of *Early Developments* highlights many of our activities at UNC, as well as the work we do to help other universities prepare professionals to work with young children and their families. By profiling a number of current and former students who have been affiliated with the institute, I hope you will have a better idea of the benefits and results of our university affiliation.

Chancellor James Moeser has set a high standard for the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—to become the leading public university in the United States. FPG is proud to be a part of the nation's oldest public university, and we intend to play a key role in helping UNC expand its national influence. If FPG succeeds in helping UNC accomplish this goal, maybe the day will come when I will no longer be asked whether or not FPG is a part of the university!

Research e n t r a i

STROLL THROUGH THE HALLS OF FPG and you will see a legacy of the Institute's role in preparing researchers for early childhood careers. Behind almost every desk sits a researcher who once trained at FPG as a doctoral or post-doctoral student, a researcher mentoring a student, or a student conducting research under the tutelage of an FPG researcher.

FPG's role in training researchers can be traced back to its establishment in the 1960s as an independent center within The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. While not able to enroll students or offer courses, FPG supports faculty who serve as chairs or members of doctoral and thesis committees, and enlists graduate students to work on various research projects. Thousands of students have done so over the years, attracted by the chance to work with expert faculty and funded projects on a variety of topics. Many of these students have gone on to work at FPG, where they have, in turn, mentored a new generation of student researchers. Others have moved to all parts of the country to serve as teachers, administrators and researchers.





Jan Blacher
Former student,
nationally recognized researcher

Researcher, teacher, writer, film consultant, parent—Jan Blacher does it all. Since receiving her doctorate in Special Education and Developmental Psychology from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1979, Blacher has been trailblazing through the field with remarkable energy. Now a professor of education at the University of California at Riverside, Blacher has won more than a dozen honors and awards, received 32 grants, served on 20 professional advisory boards, and authored or co-authored more than 50 journal articles. She is a consulting editor for *Mental Retardation* and a columnist for *Exceptional Children* magazine.

Last year, Blacher was asked to consult on an independent film called *Pumpkin* starring Christina Ricci and based around a character with mental retardation. “Working with an actor was one of the most interesting activities I’ve ever done,” Blacher says. “The film got rave reviews and made it to the finals of the Sundance Film Festival.” Laughing, she adds, “It just goes to show that having solid research training has real world applications.”

Blacher is equally excited about her role as principal investigator of the UC-Riverside Families Project, a 16-year longitudinal study of families who have children with severe mental handicaps. This study is the first to follow families after their children with developmental disabilities have been placed out of the home. What she has found is encouraging. “Placement out of the home is no longer placement out of the family,” Blacher says.

“Since the passage of the ADA and now IDEA, we’ve documented more contact between families and children placed in homes. The law brought more awareness and involvement with these children. It provided more family support and services that have allowed out-of-home placement, when necessary, to be done much later in life.”

Blacher says she feels “eternally indebted” to UNC and FPG for her training. “I attribute my grant-winning success to my training at both of those places,” Blacher says.

“Jim Gallagher schooled us well in how to do this. And even though I wanted to focus on research, I learned about policy and clinical work as well. I had Rolls Royce internships while at UNC.”

This tradition of preparing researchers continues with a host of new grants and opportunities. One of the most recent is a grant from the US Department of Education, Office of Special Educational Programs (OSEP) to train doctoral and post-doctoral students how to analyze the many national programs and data gathered about young children with disabilities.

“The country is in desperate need of people who know how to conduct large studies within a policy context,” says Gloria Harbin, principal investigator for the grant. “Policymakers are asking for evidence that the various programs they have funded are working, and we are having a hard time finding researchers capable of doing the studies. Because of the importance of these programs, the people who conduct these analyses will have an impact on shaping public policy for children with disabilities aged birth through 18 for the next five to ten years.”

Under the \$1.6 million grant, FPG will train nine individuals in each of three years. Six of those chosen will have completed all doctoral coursework, and three will have already obtained a PhD. This will be an interdisciplinary group, including psychologists, sociologists, special education and public health researchers. Recipients will go through an eight-week “boot camp” at FPG to learn the methodological skills necessary to conduct and analyze studies.

After their training, students will conduct a 10-month apprenticeship at one of the large research organizations or universities that house one or other of the national data sets. Students will choose one of the studies and conduct a secondary level of analysis, selecting their own question to research. “Not only will this be important in their own training,” Harbin says, “they will be crafting and answering important questions that would otherwise have gone unanswered, because the

agency funded to do the study didn't have the fiscal and human resources to do this level of analysis."

Harbin adds, "Our long-term goal is to encourage these students to go to work for one of these research organizations, or for a state agency, or to go back to a university to teach a new generation of students how to do these studies."

The first year of the program, beginning in January 2003, is devoted to designing the training curriculum and the apprenticeship experience. The first cohort of students will begin work in January 2004.

Integrating disciplines to understand developmental disabilities

Recent advances in behavioral science, neuroscience and molecular genetics have led to dramatic gains in our understanding of the pathogenesis of neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism and fragile X syndrome. In recognition of these advancements, the UNC Neurodevelopmental Disorders Research Center received a training grant from the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development to develop researchers with expertise in both the biological basis and clinical manifestations of neurodevelopmental disorders.

Karen Sparkman

Doctoral candidate in UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Education



As a former special education teacher and school psychologist, Karen Sparkman has experienced first-hand the need to promote social and emotional competence among young children.

Sparkman believes teachers' educational beliefs and practices are key in helping young children achieve this competence. Her work with FPG researchers, funded through a student-initiated grant from the US Department of Education, is helping her understand which classroom practices teachers identify as being most conducive to helping young children regulate their behaviors and emotions and get along with peers.

A native of Greenville, SC, Sparkman is a third-year doctoral student in the Early Childhood Families and Literacy

Studies (ECFL) program in UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Education. She came to UNC from Atlanta, where she was in charge of statewide training and technical assistance for Part C (children aged birth to three years) of the Individuals with Disabilities Act. Doctoral training was made possible by tuition assistance and stipends through an Early Intervention Leadership Training grant awarded to FPG from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Sparkman hopes to continue her research through a faculty appointment that blends early childhood/special education teacher preparation and local/state policy development.

"In my work, I have noticed a real lack of [translating] research to practice," Sparkman says. "We tend to do what we're used to doing, not what the research suggests we should do. My goal is to work with practitioners, students, and researchers to facilitate the integration of research findings into our day-to-day practices, especially as it relates to inclusion efforts and policy development for young children and their families."

Sparkman spends her days observing teacher's interactions with students in child care centers, developmental day programs and Head Start classrooms throughout the central region of North Carolina. She will conduct both qualitative and quantitative analyses, using data obtained through interviews with teachers and observations of their interactions with children. Her findings will ultimately be incorporated into her doctoral thesis: "Promoting Social and Emotional Competence in Preschoolers with and without Disabilities: What is the Role of Teachers' Educational Beliefs and Practices."

"Working with researchers at FPG has been a great learning experience," Sparkman says. "They allow me to work as a partner in their research efforts. My grant requires me to state how my research will translate into practice. The guidance and model provided by FPG researchers is making that connection clear."

“This broad-based and integrated perspective will enable researchers to better relate across disciplines and will maximize the potential for major research advances in understanding the pathogenesis and treatment of these disorders,” says Joanne Roberts, FPG researcher and co-director of the post doctoral research program with Joseph Piven, director of UNC Neurodevelopmental Disorders Research Center.

Currently, six post-doctoral students are funded by this grant, including developmental psychologists, geneticists and molecular and cell biologists. Program sponsors facilitate interaction among the students around different aspects of research in developmental disabilities. Several of the post-doctoral fellows are planning to visit the FPG Child Development Institute to observe a child with Fragile X syndrome. This will give each of the students the chance to learn something different about the disease. One of the post-doctoral fellows, Elizabeth Hennon, a developmental psychologist, works at FPG on the Fragile X Communication Project. She plans to observe a geneticist conduct a Southern blot analysis (a type of analysis to determine if an individual has Fragile X or another type of genetic disorder).

“This will really help me to understand the genetics of Fragile X,” Hennon says. “Conversely, the biologist will be able to observe how a child with Fragile X behaves. The beauty of this fellowship is in having people from diverse backgrounds talking with each other.”

Hennon is also learning about grant writing from Roberts.

“Beth will hopefully acquire the skills during this fellowship to write and get an NIH grant funded of her own,” Roberts says.

“That will make her even more marketable.”

FPG's role in preparing PhDs

FPG has a long history of preparing interdisciplinary researchers in early intervention and family support. These

efforts have primarily been supported by federal grants from OSEP through the UNC School of Education. The newest of these doctoral grants will allow several students in Speech and Hearing Services and in the School of Education at UNC-Chapel Hill to take courses together that focus on research in early intervention.

“There is a huge shortage of doctoral level faculty in the area of speech

and hearing, and in early intervention,” says Betsy Crais, FPG fellow overseeing the project with Harriet Boone. Over the four semesters of the program, grant recipients will be mentored in research by faculty from FPG, the School of Education and Speech and Hearing Services.

“Classes will be co-taught by faculty from these different disciplines, which will give the students multiple perspectives,” says Betsy Crais. Students will receive stipends to attend national meetings on early intervention, make presentations and meet peers. ■

The beauty of
this fellowship
is in having
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backgrounds
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To Learn More

Carolina Interdisciplinary Large-scale Policy
Research Training

Principal Investigator:

Gloria Harbin

harbin@email.unc.edu

919-962-7371

Preparing Special Education and Related Service Academic
and Research Leaders with an Emphasis on Communication
and Social Relationships

Co-Directors:

Elizabeth Crais, Speech & Hearing

bcrais@med.unc.edu

919-966-9458

Harriet Boone, School of Education

haboone@email.unc.edu

919-962-9371

Fragile X Communication Project

Co-Directors:

Joanne Roberts

joanne_roberts@unc.edu

919-966-7164

Joseph Piven

jpiven@css.unc.edu

919-843-8641

Making It Real



Preparing Students to be Effective Practitioners

Along with its role in preparing researchers, FPG also helps prepare practitioners in early education and intervention. This preparation has taken numerous forms from student teaching and internships in the FPG Child Care Program to participating in federally funded grant programs and other initiatives.

ONE CURRENT EXAMPLE is the Transatlantic Consortium on Early Childhood Intervention, a first-of-its-kind international program to train graduate students in a cross-cultural setting. Funded by the European Union and the US Department of Education, the consortium consists of three American universities—UNC-Chapel Hill, The University of Colorado and Vanderbilt University—together with Malardalen and Stockholm Universities in Sweden, Ludwig Maximilians University in Germany, Jyvaskyla University in Finland and Porto University in Portugal.

Through a series of intensive courses held both here and abroad, along with web-based interaction, graduate students will be exposed to different models of service delivery for children and families in varied cultural, ethnic and social environments. They also will have an opportunity for extended visits in participating countries.

FPG fellows Irene Nathan Zipper, project coordinator, in the School of Social Work and Rune Simeonsson, project co-director, in the School of Education, both at UNC-Chapel Hill, and Eva Bjorck-Akesson, project co-director, from

Malardalen University are working together to direct and implement the project. “The consortium represents a wonderful opportunity for students to examine their own assumptions, to learn from each other, and to consider the implications for early childhood intervention in their own countries,” Zipper says. “There are lots of differences among these countries in terms of attitudes towards people with disabilities and in the way services are provided. We will be pairing American and European students together to stimulate the learning experience.”

After a year of planning, the consortium will offer its first intensive course in Sweden in June of 2003 focusing on understanding functioning and disability in early childhood, and intervention theories and models. This will be followed in September by a three-week course at UNC-Chapel Hill addressing families and early intervention and service systems and coordination. Additional courses will be held in 2004 at Vanderbilt and Porto Universities.

From a distance: Alternatives for working students

FPG has recently completed another project focused on preparing early childhood teachers within the context of community colleges and the Internet. Early childhood workers seeking to enhance their education through traditional college classes have been limited by a host of factors, including lack of release time during the work day; lack of access and transportation to college campuses, particularly in rural areas; and limited numbers of qualified

college instructors. Although community colleges try to offer a variety of alternatives for working students, few have the resources, time and skills to develop and support high quality early childhood distance learning courses. Toward that end, FPG launched Project CONTACT to increase the state’s capacity to provide education options that meet the needs of a low resource population, which includes early childhood education distance learning courses. The project’s strength lies in the collaboration among key partners including the NC Community College System, the North Carolina Partnership for Children (Smart Start), the NC Division of Child Development, LEARN NC, Fayetteville Technical Community College, and local Smart Start partnerships, child care resource and referral agencies and community colleges.

During 2001, Project CONTACT selected four North Carolina community colleges to deliver the pilot courses, working in conjunction with four local Smart Start programs. Instructors worked as a team to develop the courses, receiving considerable support and training from project staff in the development of online courses and the use of Internet technology. Fifty-five students were recruited for the spring semester of 2002. Project CONTACT offered them support in terms of help in getting financial assistance, Internet access and computer equipment. The project also provided them with computer and Internet skills training and various resources, including a guide to distance learning.



Ilean Hill

Former student & early intervention and family support specialist

Known for training researchers and teachers, FPG can count among its graduates a growing number of practitioners in the field of early childhood intervention. Ilean Hill is an early intervention and family support specialist for the Wake County (North Carolina) Department of Social Services. In that job, she provides child service coordination for the county, writes Individualized Family

Service Plan (IFSPs) for children birth to three years of age, conducts developmental assessments, and provides special instruction for children.

“I’m a direct service provider, but I also do supportive counseling for children and their families, as well as child service coordination,” Hill says. “I wear a lot of different hats that are not in my job description.”

While holding down her job with the county, Hill earned a master’s degree from the School of Education at UNC-Chapel Hill. Hill did not receive direct training at FPG, but was taught by several FPG researchers, including Pam Winton.

As the only person of color in the Early Intervention and Family Support program at the time, Hill let it be known that she thought the school needed to recruit a more diverse student body and faculty to serve the increasingly diverse population of children with special needs. That, in part, prompted FPG to launch such programs as Walking the Walk aimed at increasing diversity among early childhood personnel and leaders.

“The population we work with grows more diverse every year,” Hill says. “I’m not just talking about African-Americans, but also Hispanics and Asians. And it’s not just racial diversity, it’s linguistic, as well. There is a need and an effort to hire more bilingual people here and in all the other agencies that serve young people.”

Students reported enjoying the flexibility of distance learning, logging on to the courses at all times of the day and night. They also reported having developed strong professional and personal networks as a result of involvement in the course,” says project evaluator, Mary Ruth Coleman. CONTACT’s benefits are extending into the future: the North Carolina Community College System has integrated the findings from CONTACT into their system-wide course development and faculty training components, and additional funding is allowing CONTACT to extend into more counties.

Preparation within FPG’s doors

Perhaps the way in which FPG best prepares practitioners is by offering them a wide range of research and professional development activities in which to participate. Founded in 1966, the Institute’s mission includes research, demonstration and professional development, along with providing direct services for children and families. Each year, dozens of students from UNC-Chapel Hill participate in training programs at the child care center. Undergraduates majoring in education often do practicum placements at the center, observing interactions between teachers and children or how to intervene with children with special needs. Students from other disciplines, including nursing, occupational therapy, speech language pathology and physical therapy also come to the child care center to participate in these professional development opportunities. Instructors from these schools also invite FPG teachers to talk to their classes.

Many students participate in internships at the center, a 40-hour-a-week job that involves creating courses and leading class under the guidance of a licensed teacher. “Student-teaching experiences are incredibly valuable,” says P. J. McWilliam, former director of the child care center. “The experience students gain from working with an FPG teacher has more influence on their teaching style than any classroom training.

“It’s also a benefit for our staff,” McWilliam adds. “They enjoy the opportunity to mentor students and it gives them an extra set of hands. It’s a genuine win-win situation.”

Looking at the “Big Picture”

In addition to these various efforts to support early childhood teachers-in-training, FPG is working on teacher preparation at the system, or “big picture,” level for prekindergarten. Nationally, the demand for quality prekindergarten programs is rising, yet there is a severe shortage of qualified teachers to meet this demand. The National Research Council, in its *Eager to Learn* report, recommends that prekindergarten teachers have a Bachelor’s degree in early childhood education. Yet a 2001 national survey estimated that no more than 50 percent of teachers of three- and four-year-olds have a BA degree. As states serve more children in prekindergarten, they are struggling to hire enough qualified teachers.

To address this and other pressing prekindergarten issues, FPG and the Foundation for Child Development created the National Prekindergarten Center (NPC). Co-directed by Richard Clifford and Kelly Maxwell, NPC’s mission is to help local, state and federal leaders develop and implement high-quality prekindergarten programs through research, policy analysis, technical assistance and communications. NPC is focusing most of its efforts on the issues of professional development, financing and governance.

In April 2002, NPC hosted a working symposium entitled *Strategies for Preparing Highly Qualified Prekindergarten Teachers*. Approximately 30 professional development experts met to brainstorm preservice and inservice strategies for producing more qualified pre-k teachers. As part of that

meeting, participants developed a set of principles to guide the development of various professional development efforts. One principle, for example, recommends that teacher preparation be viewed as a key component of any pre-k program (rather than an add-on that can be cut in tight budget times). Another principle recommends that efforts should be made to ensure that the pre-k teacher workforce reflects the diversity of children and families served.

Through this variety of projects and strategies, FPG is playing an important role, not only in preparing practitioners through technology and other innovative methods, but also developing policies and guidelines for ensuring that early childhood programs include qualified personnel as a critical component of global program quality. ■

To Learn More

Transatlantic Consortium on
Early Childhood Intervention
Rune Simeonsson, Project Co-director
rune_simeonsson@unc.edu
919-962-2512



Mary Ruth Coleman, Project Evaluator
mary_ruth-coleman@unc.edu
919-962-7375



National
Prekindergarten
Center

Richard Clifford & Kelly Maxwell,
Principal Investigators
maxwell@mail.fpg.unc.edu
www.fpg.unc.edu/~npc

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Elevating the Educators



photo: Pat Wesley



photo: courtesy of Walking the Walk Project

The Quest for Quality Begins with Effective Faculty

As an interdisciplinary institute within UNC-Chapel Hill, FPG has established close relationships with the various schools and departments involved in promoting the development and well-being of young children and families. FPG provides UNC faculty members with an “interdisciplinary home” for conducting research and collaborative planning and teaching. The institute regularly hosts special conferences and training events that further the knowledge and skills of faculty not just at UNC, but also at other universities and institutions across the state and the nation.

One of these projects, Walking the Walk, seeks to address the nationwide shortage of a culturally and linguistically diverse pool of early childhood teachers. Experts predict that by the year 2005, children and adolescents of color will make up as much as 40 percent of the US youth population. Most of the teachers, specialists and administrators in this field, however, are white and female.

Walking the Walk has developed a model to help produce well-qualified and diverse early childhood personnel and leaders in five North Carolina communities: Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Chapel Hill-Chatham County, Durham and Raleigh. A sixth team is working to promote diversity at a statewide level.

Project efforts target improvements in the recruitment and support of culturally and linguistically diverse college students and better preparation for all students to work with a diverse group of families, children and colleagues.

Walking the Walk began in each community with a stakeholder meeting to identify priorities for change. The project also sponsored a three-day institute to help community teams discover new methods, models and materials related to diversity. Ongoing support and follow-up from project staff has assured that these efforts designed to bring change to the community stay on track.

As a result of these efforts, historically black universities and their college and university counterparts in Raleigh and Greensboro are now sharing courses and practical experiences in early childhood education and early intervention. Community organizations are finding new opportunities to have input into what students learn, where they learn and from whom. And clear evidence is emerging that faculty members have discovered new ways to bring diversity into their teaching.

Photo: courtesy of Dan Haggard



Dan Haggard

FPG project participant &
NM state administrator

“It’s slow work to grow relationships among new partners, but the potential for what they can accomplish together is enormous,” says Camille Catlett, who co-directs the project with Pam Winton.

While Walking the Walk is focusing on North Carolina communities, strategies and products should be usable elsewhere. The project web site (www.fpg.unc.edu/~walkingthewalk) offers a variety of examples and resources, including a downloadable diversity guide (www.fpg.unc.edu/~walkingthewalk/pdfs/RG10-DWTW.pdf).

Nationwide, early childhood and early intervention partners, in concert with families, are encouraging opportunities for child care centers, gymborees and other community programs to include children with special needs. Progress is hindered, however, because many early childhood teachers and administrators were not trained to support the inclusion of these children. Catlett and Winton also co-direct Natural Allies, an FPG project that focuses on better preparing students at community colleges to work with young children with special needs.

Community colleges are a natural training ground for the kinds of personnel who work in these natural community environments. FPG believes that the training can be greatly improved by bringing together “natural allies”—early intervention providers, state agencies, family members of young children with special needs and disability organizations—to craft collaborative teaching experiences that enhance students’ preparation to work with all young children.

Eight states are involved in the project: one cohort consisting of Iowa, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and Texas; and a second cohort consisting Idaho, Illinois, Nebraska and North Dakota. These states have engaged in a planning process to identify priorities for enhancing early childhood teacher preparation programs at community colleges. In the fall of 2002, 62 representatives from the states in Cohort 1 attended an institute in Flat Rock, NC, to continue the planning process and build new skills.

Dan Haggard’s passion is promoting professional development for all those who work with young children. As Director of the New Mexico Early Childhood Development Initiative, his challenge has been to develop a system where people

who work with young children—early interventionists, special education teachers, Head Start workers and child care workers—can receive training to improve their competencies without leaving their jobs.

“We have a career lattice with levels of licensure and education,” Haggard says. “For the past 15 years, we’ve worked to develop a system where people can flow through while they’re working. This must be a non-traditional program, so we’re always looking for ideas from experts in the field.”

Haggard’s program received a big boost when he and a team of professionals from New Mexico participated in successive training programs sponsored by FPG in 1996 and 1999. With the help of FPG investigators Pam Winton and Camille Catlett, Haggard’s team developed a state action plan to ensure that educational assistants in any of the child centered programs are represented in the career lattice and professional development system. They implemented that plan upon returning to New Mexico.

“FPG’s retreat was extremely valuable,” Haggard says. “We met with teams from other states to learn how they handled similar issues and we received training from experts in the field.”

Back in New Mexico, Haggard is seeking to initiate a teach and wages scholarship similar to North Carolina’s, a universal course of study at the associate degree and bachelor’s level, a credit for prior learning system, and a statewide on-line training program.

“There’s plenty to do in the professional development field,” Haggard says.

He continues his involvement with FPG as a presenter at the Natural Allies institute.



photo: courtesy of Susan Simon

Susan Simon

FPG project participant & community college faculty in Iowa

Call her the champion of the community colleges. Susan Simon believes there is no more important institution in the training of professionals to work with people with disabilities and their families. As a faculty member at Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids,

Iowa, Simon coordinates two programs. The first introduces and prepares students to work in varied careers aiding people with disabilities. The second, a pre-social work program, prepares students for more broad-based work on behalf of the needy in settings such as mental health departments, crisis intervention centers, youth shelters and group homes.

“Community colleges are critical because of how accessible they are to our students,” Simon says. “We offer classes face-to-face both in the city and in our county centers. Financially, our cost is much less than a college or university. Many of our students have families and jobs and can only come to evening classes. And our culture is approachable to those who come from families who never went to college.”

Simon was part of the original Iowa SCRIPT (Supporting Change and Reform in Interprofessional Preservice Training) team that received training through one of FPG’s faculty development projects.

“That was the best training I’ve ever received,” Simon says. “I came as part of an interdisciplinary team from all parts of Iowa. We developed an Iowa plan at the retreat, set some realistic

As a result of these efforts, community college faculty are making changes in what they are teaching and with whom. For example, a faculty member at a Pennsylvania community college has used parents and early interventionists to talk to her students about inclusion and children with special needs. Several communities in Pennsylvania are working to include children with special needs in child care programs so that college students will be able to see inclusion working. Oklahoma, Iowa and Pennsylvania will be sponsoring statewide conferences to help a broader group of early childhood faculty members discover resources and connect with early intervention partners.

“This project is creating ‘blind dates’ for early childhood and early intervention colleagues who have a lot in common and would benefit from each other if they got a chance to work together,” Catlett says. “What we’re finding is that these partners have a lot to offer each other. In fact, they can greatly enhance each other’s work.”

The Natural Allies web site (www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/nat_allies) contains additional information and downloadable products (see www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/pages/products.cfm).

One group of young children for whom there is a particular lack of qualified teachers consists of those with visual impairments. Researchers estimate there are approximately 20,000 children with visual impairments in the United States in the birth-to-five age range. In 2000, US colleges and universities turned out only 273 teachers of the visually impaired, and most of these were hired to provide services to children between the ages of 5 and 21 years.

To help close that gap, FPG launched The Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers with Visual Impairments. There are a relatively small number of colleges and universities across the nation that house professional development programs offering a visual impairment specialization. The center is focusing on developing resources to help faculty in those institutions better prepare students to work specifically with infants and toddlers with visual impairments.

Under the direction of Deborah Hatton, the project has developed a series of multimedia, interactive content modules geared toward a university audience.

goals, then came back and implemented it. We continue to meet several times a year. We've developed training materials and hold conferences."

On a more personal level, Simon took what she learned at the retreat and implemented it as part of her teaching at the community college. "The single greatest message I took away from the FPG training was the importance of including families in any intervention," she says. "I always have my students interact with the families of individuals they are trying to serve. I bring family members into class to share their experiences with the students. Families tell us what we should teach."

Simon continues her involvement with FPG as a member of Iowa's Natural Allies team.

Another venture through which FPG is supporting faculty is the CMI Outreach Project headed by P. J. McWilliam. The Case Method of Instruction (CMI) is a teaching methodology used to facilitate self-reflection and the decision making skills needed for successfully applying theory to practice. In CMI, students are presented with narrative descriptions of real life situations (i.e., case stories) that professionals in their chosen profession encounter in their daily work with children, families and other professionals. A skilled instructor guides learners through an analysis of each situation and the development of a reasonable solution to the problem presented in the case story.

Working with Patricia Snyder of the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center on a series of projects funded by the US Department of Education (OSEP), McWilliam developed a collection of case stories and related training materials specific to early intervention that is now available to instructors (www.cmiproject.net). McWilliam and Snyder are focusing their current efforts on spreading the word about CMI and providing instructors with the skills to incorporate CMI into their own training of students and clinicians. They have developed a three-day CMI seminar with follow-up activities and have now conducted these training sessions with instructors in early childhood, early childhood special education and related disciplines in six states (Louisiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Georgia, Delaware and Wisconsin). ■

To Learn More

Walking the Walk

natural ALLIES

Principal Investigators

Camille Catlett

camille@unc.edu

919-966-6635

Pam Winton

pam_winton@unc.edu

919-966-7180

www.fpg.unc.edu/~walkingthewalk/

www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/nat_allies/

The Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers with Visual Impairments

Principal Investigator

Deborah Hatton

EITC@unc.edu

866-842-2237 (toll-free)

www.fpg.unc.edu/~edin/



Principal Investigator

P.J. McWilliam, Ph.D.

919-966-5098

pj_mcwilliam@unc.edu

www.cmiproject.net

New Teacher Resource

Ultimately it's not the program that affects the child, but the child's experiences within the program

Teaching 4- to 8-year-olds is part of series of books edited by FPG Director Don Bailey in conjunction with NCEDL.

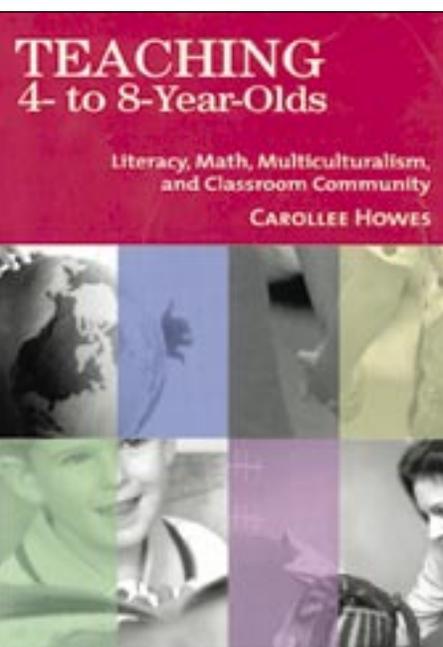
In his forward, Bailey says, "This book makes an important contribution to a national discussion on programs and practices by focusing on elements of prekindergarten and early elementary programs that must be considered in the development and refinement of program models."

The authors argue for early childhood programs that emphasize teaching and learning the context of classrooms that are organized as social community, with a heavy focus on the social-emotional relationships between children and adults in these classrooms.

This perspective suggests that early childhood programs can and should teach children, but that teaching can occur only in an environment that is nurturing, warm, and positive for children.

Teaching 4- to 8-year-olds

was inspired by a NCEDL conference attended by 200 teachers, university and community college faculty, and nationally known researchers.



Structure of book

With *Teaching 4- to 8-year-olds*, early childhood educators will tune in to how their students think and learn—and they'll get sound research-based information and developmentally appropriate teaching practices in four critical areas:

Literacy—including promoting enthusiasm for reaching, developing phonological awareness, and improving reading comprehension

Mathematics—including creating data displays, looking for patterns, drawing on everyday experiences, and working math into classroom conversations

Multiculturalism—including accepting differences, discouraging stereotypes, and development an awareness of diverse cultures and family structures

Classroom community—including making friends, resolving conflicts, and strengthening student-teacher relationships

For each topic, readers get a theory chapter that explains research in everyday language and illustrates the concepts through lively examples, and a practice chapter that translates the research into real-world tips and strategies.

Teachers will appreciate the concise, to-the-point advice on key issues such as teaching English-language learners, assessing skills, enhancing school readiness and giving all children a voice in the classroom.

Chapter authors include Jean Baker, Laura Dilly, Carol Lacey, Sharon Ritchie, Linda Espinosa, Susan Burns, Jolena James-Szanton, Megan Franke, Elham Kazemi, Aisa Ray, Peter Hoffman-Kipp and Carollee Howes. ■

Teaching 4- to 8-year-olds:
Literacy, Math, Multiculturalism and Classroom Community
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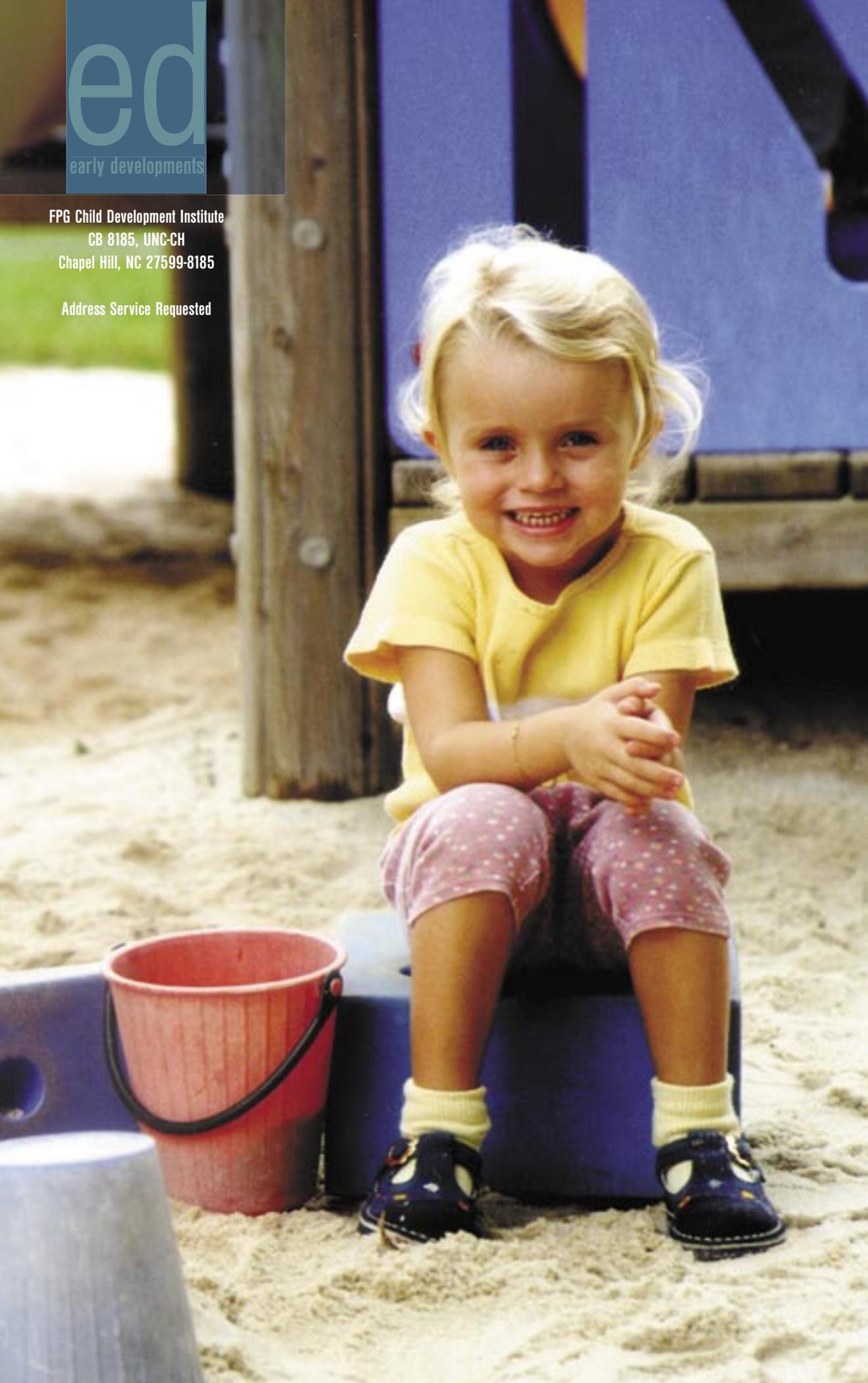
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