



early developments Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center

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pre-Kindergarten

Contents

Pre-K at Issue

School Readiness

FPG Recent Publications

Pre-K for Children with Special Needs

NCEDL News

State Initiatives

State Policies on Readiness

New Directions

NCEDL Recent Publications

ed

early developments

New directions



MUCH ATTENTION IS BEING GIVEN TO PRE-K PROGRAMS OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. In many states, public schools are examining what role they will play in pre-K education and many different models are being tried. What are these programs like? In order to help answer that question, NCEDL has received \$11 million to launch a major new study of prekindergarten programs linked to public schools.

The new three-year grant was announced by the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education.

The center is based at the UNC-Chapel Hill, with key collaborators at the University of California at Los Angeles and the University of Virginia.

Since its founding in 1996, NCEDL has examined effective practices in caring for and educating young children, determined how those practices are being used, identified barriers to them, and tested results and models for improvement, said Richard Clifford, co-director of the center with Donna Bryant. Both are senior scientists at the Graham center and professors in UNC's School of Education.

"One specific area of our work has been the quality of child care and its effects on children during their preschool and early school years," Clifford said. "Public prekindergarten will be the focus of NCEDL through early 2004."

Bryant said, "With 42 states already serving some of their four-year-olds in state-funded programs and most states considering expansion, the country needs more information about effective models."

NCEDL investigators estimate that nearly a million pre-K children are served in programs located in or linked to public elementary schools. Some programs focus on children from low-income families; others are universal. Standards such as teacher training, class size and duration of program vary considerably.

"We need to know more about how these differences affect children's experiences in prekindergarten and their transition into the beginning school years," said Bryant.

The center's extended research into prekindergarten will focus on a sample of pre-K classes from California, Ohio, New York, Illinois, Georgia and Kentucky. Researchers will assess those children and their

classrooms with emphasis on literacy, math and social skills development several times before first grade, and documenting transition activities of the schools and early childhood programs.

"We expect to have a much clearer understanding of the relationship between specific instructional practices in pre-K and kindergarten classes and children's language, cognitive and social development," Clifford said.

Carollee Howes and Robert Pianta head the UCLA and UVA teams, respectively.



NCEDL is one of 12 national centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education to conduct research into significant problems in education. It is the only center that focuses on early childhood.

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Recent Publications from the National Center for Early Development and Learning

Bradley
Burchinal
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Howes
Nelson
Peisner-Feinberg
Phillipsen
Pianta
Rimm-Kaufman
Saluja
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Roberts
Taylor
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