



early developments Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

Spring 2003 | Volume 7 #1

Professional Development

Director's Notes

Research Central

Making It Real: Preparing Students to be Effective Practitioners

FPG Publications

Elevating the Educators: The Quest for Quality Begins with Effective Faculty

Teaching 4-8 Year Olds

NCEDL Publications

ed

early developments

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

Assessment of preschool children's peer-related social competence. Brown, W. H., Odom, S. L., & Buysse, V. (2002). *Assessment for Effective Intervention*, 27(4), 61-71.

Delayed diagnosis of fragile X syndrome – United States, 1990-1999. Bailey, D. B., Skinner, D., Sparkman, K., Moore, C.A, Olney, R.S., & Crawford, D.C. (2002). *MMRW*, 51, 740-742.

Disability, health coverage and welfare reform. Skinner, D., Slattery, E., Lachicotte, W., Cherlin, A., & Burton, L. (2003). Washington, DC: The Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured.

Early childhood teachers need support to include children with disabilities. Catlett, C., & Wittmer, D. (2002, September). *Early Childhood Report*, 13(9), 10.

Early intervention consultants in the classroom: Simple steps for building strong collaboration. Wesley, P. (2002). *Young Children*, 57(4), 30-34.

Educators need resources, training to serve all learners. Catlett, C., & Wittmer, D. (2002, October). *Early Childhood Report*, 13(10), 4.

Home stretch: Activities for parents and preschoolers. Hardin, B., & Wesley, P. W. (2002). Lewisville, NC: Kaplan Press.

Implementing inclusive early childhood education. Soodak, L., Erwin, E., Winton, P., Brotherson, M., Turnbull, A., Hanson, M., & Brault, L. (2002). *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 22(2), 91-102.

Infants and toddlers with visual impairments: Suggestions for early interventionists. Hatton, D., McWilliam, R., & Winton, P. (2002). ERIC Digest: ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education.

Oral language and reading abilities of first grade Peruvian children: Associations with child and family factors. Castro, D. C., Lubker, B. B., Bryant, D. M., & Skinner, M. (2002). *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 26(4), 334-344.

Preparing twice exceptional students for adult lives: A critical need. Huan, B., & Coleman, M.R. (2002). *Understanding Our Gifted*, 17-19.

Resources within reason: Children who are blind or visually impaired. Hatton, D., Catlett, C., Winton, P., & Mitchell, A. (2002). *Young Exceptional Children*, 5(4), 28.

Resources within reason: Insights and lessons from families of children with disabilities. Catlett, C., Winton, P., & Parrish, R. (2002). *Young Exceptional Children*, 5(2), 28.

lications

Setting effects on friendship formation among young children with and without disabilities.

Buyse, V., Goldman, B. D., & Skinner, M. L. (2002). *Exceptional Children*, 68(4), 503-517.

A statewide profile of early intervention services using the Part C data system.

Buyse, V., Bernier, K., & McWilliam, R. A. (2002). *Journal of Early Intervention*, 25(1), 15-26.

Thank you for being a friend: Fostering friendships for children with autism spectrum disorder in inclusive environments.

Danko, C. D., & Buyse, V. (2002). *Young Exceptional Children*, 6(1), 2-9.

The use of public health databases to estimate the risk for special education placement.

Redden, S., Scandlin, D., Roth, M., Devine, J., & Buescher, P. (2002). Raleigh, NC: State Center for Health Statistics.

f or more information about FPG publications, see the FPG web site at www.fpg.unc.edu or contact the FPG Publications Office at 919 • 966 • 4221 or pubs@mail.fpg.unc.edu