



early developments Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

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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,

IA, 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

WalkingtheWalk

natural ALLIES

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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.

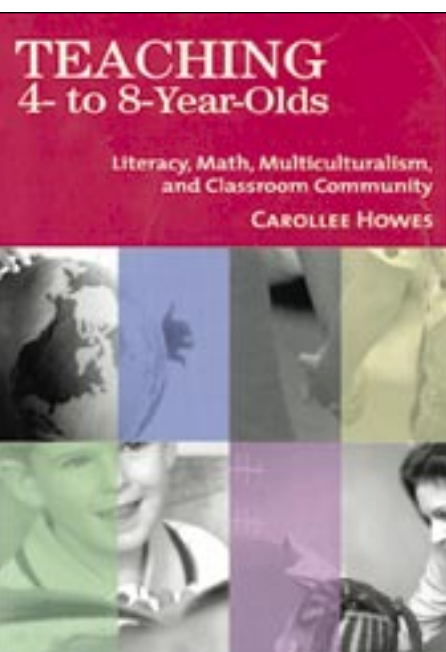
In his forward, Bailey says, "This book makes an important contribution to a national discussion on programs and practices by focusing on elements of prekindergarten and early elementary programs that must be considered in the development and refinement of program models."

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
Edited by Carollee Howes,
Professor and Division Head of
Psychological Studies in Education
University of California—Los Angeles.
Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Co.
ISBN 1-55766-597-4

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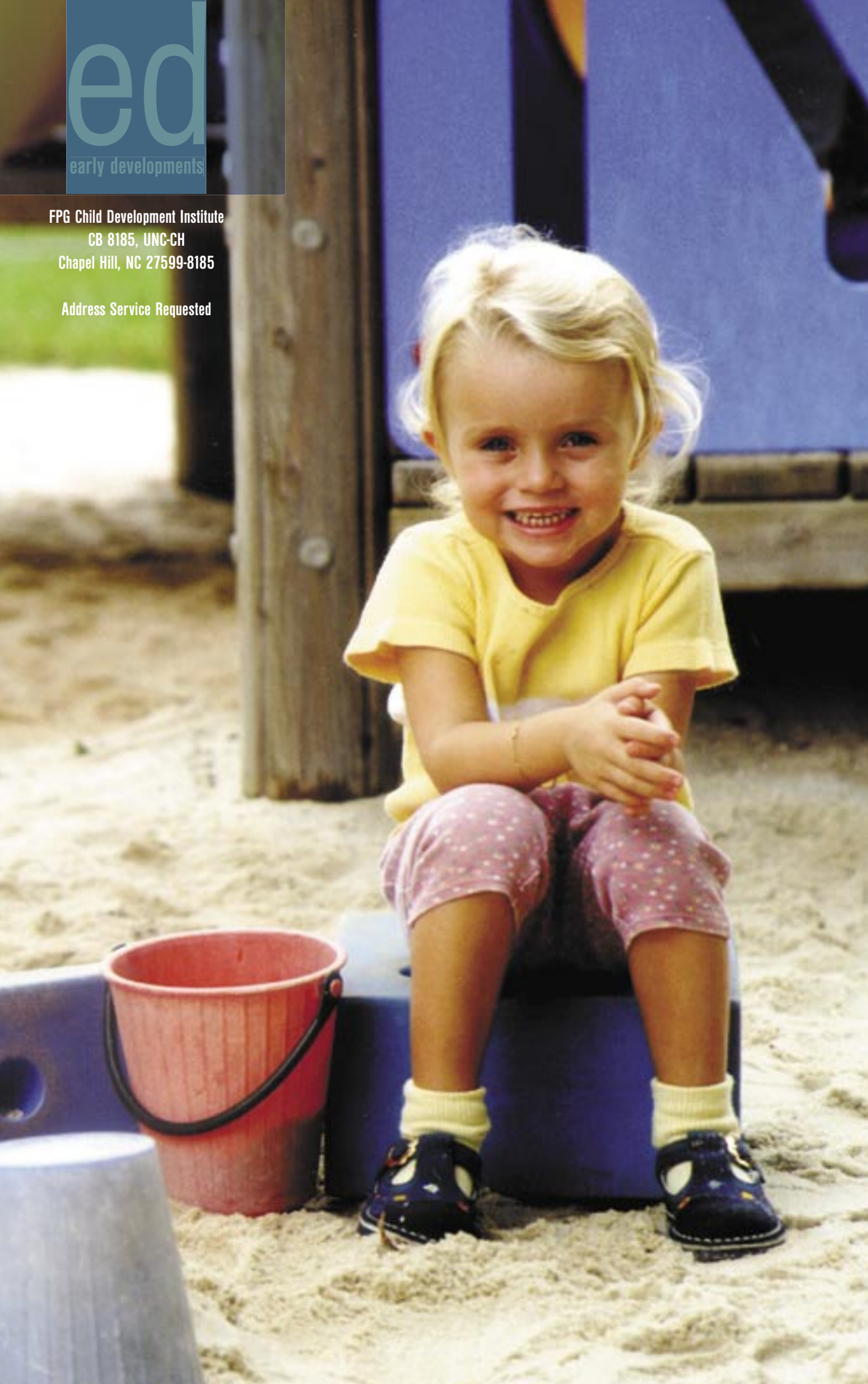
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