

## Head Start Graduate Student Research Program: 2012 Research Scholars

### Dawn Davis

**Project Title:** Intervention Fidelity, Teacher Perceptions, and Child Outcomes of a Literacy Curriculum in a Head Start Program: A Mixed Methods Study

**Mentor:** Helen Raikes

**Project Funding Years:** 2012-2013

**University Affiliation:** University of Nebraska-Lincoln

**Project Abstract:** The study will examine relations among implementation fidelity of an intervention curriculum, teacher characteristics, and their perceptions of intervention curriculum, and child literacy outcomes within Head Start programs participating in an Early Reading First project. The implications of this mixed-methods study include: 1) strengthening intervention design and improving curriculum intervention fidelity of implementation in early childhood programs; 2) providing further evidence on the importance of implementation fidelity; 3) maximizing potential impacts of interventions by increasing fidelity; 4) benefits to child literacy outcomes; 5) support to Head Start classroom teachers for curriculum implementation.

#### **Sample:**

216 Head Start Children

11 Head Start Teachers

16 Head Start Classrooms

#### **Measures:**

##### *Child Measures*

- Peabody Picture Vocabulary – III Test (PPVT-III Test)
- Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening – Preschool (PALS-PreK)
- Get Ready to Read! Screener (GRTR)
- Family Demographic Survey

##### *Teacher Measures*

- Staff Demographic Survey
- Opening the World of Learning (OWL) Fidelity Checklist
- Teacher Guided Interview and Ratings

### Irena Nayfeld

**Project Title:** Learning through Inquiry: Examining the Relationship between Child-Generated Questions, Teacher Practices, and School Readiness in Head Start Classrooms

**Mentor:** Daryl B. Greenfield

**Project Funding Years:** 2012-2014

**University Affiliation:** University of Miami

**Project Abstract:** The proposed study will assess child-generated inquiry as well as teacher practices that encourage inquiry. Specific aims of the project are to: 1) assess child-generated inquiry over the course of the school year; 2) examine whether inquiry skills at the beginning of the school year predict gains in mathematics, vocabulary, listening comprehension, and science knowledge over the course of the year; and 3) assess the moderating role of teacher's levels of emotional support and instructional support on gains in inquiry skills and on the relationship between inquiry skills and mathematics, vocabulary, listening comprehension and science knowledge. Using multilevel modeling, the proposed project will be the first to examine child-generated inquiry in a sample of children enrolled in Head Start. Expected outcome is a contribution to the understanding of this domain-general skill, its development over the course of the school year, and its relationship with academic outcomes.

**Sample:** 320 Head Start children from 32 classrooms (10 children per classroom) participating in the Institution of Education Sciences *Lens on Science* project.

**Measures:**

- Learning Express (LE)
- Lens on Science (LENS)
- Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

## Vanessa Pressimone

**Project Title:** Head Start Families' School Readiness Beliefs and Transitioning Roles

**Mentor:** Patricia H. Manz

**Project Funding Years:** 2012-2013

**University Affiliation:** Lehigh University

**Project Abstract:** The study will develop a practical measure of parental expectations and beliefs, the *Family Expectations for School Readiness Involvement (FESRI)* in English and Spanish. The measure will be developed through qualitative (parents' focus groups, partnership team, expert review) and quantitative (EFA, Rasch) methods. The relationship between involvement beliefs, involvement behaviors, and family characteristics will also be examined. The proposed project will contribute a greater understanding of the parent perspective on family involvement in school readiness and kindergarten transition. The goals of the study directly align with Head Start Performance Standards that programs consult with parents to establish readiness goals.

**Sample:** Approximately 200 Head Start parents

**Measures:**

- Program collected data on child and family characteristics
- Family Expectations for School Readiness Involvement (FESRI in English and Spanish)
- Family Involvement Questionnaire (FIQ in English and Spanish)
- Program records on family involvement and kindergarten transition activities made available to families and activities completed by families

### **Caroline Shanti**

**Project Title:** Understanding Parental Engagement: Investigating the Home Visitor Experience and Context

**Mentor:** Marji Erickson Warfield

**Project Funding Years:** 2012-2013

**University Affiliation:** Brandeis University

**Project Abstract:** This exploratory study will examine the individual, program, and agency factors that impact home visitor ability to engage parents. The study has three primary goals: 1) to understand the push-pull between standardization and individualization as it takes place in EHS home visiting programs; 2) to understand how home visitors develop the ability to achieve engagement; and 3) to integrate the findings from goal one and goal two to understand how implementation choices made by individual programs impact home visitor ability and experience in engaging parents. This is a comparative case study, with the primary form of data collection being 30-minute phone interviews with EHS program managers or directors. Findings will inform replicable models of approaches to team building, mentoring, supervision, and training that could be implemented across the spectrum of possible program design in EHS.

**Sample:** 28 home visitors and 8 supervisors from four Early Head Start Home Visiting Programs in Region 1.

**Measures:**

- In-depth interviews with home visitors and supervisors

### **Diana Westerberg**

**Project Title:** Student-Teacher Relationship, Cortisol Reactivity, and Behavioral Outcomes of Children Attending Head Start

**Mentor:** Julia Mendez Smith

**Project Funding Years:** 2012-2014

**University Affiliation:** University of North Carolina at Greensboro

**Project Abstract:** The project examines the buffering role of student-teacher relationship in Head Start populations. The three major objectives of the research are: 1) to describe the chronic stress experienced by children attending Head Start and investigate how chronic stress impacts their cortisol reactivity to a stress paradigm; 2) to examine the relation between children's cortisol reactivity and child behavior problems and social competence; and 3) to investigate the moderating role of teacher relationships on the relation between children's cortisol reactivity, behavior problems, and social competence. The study findings will help identify chronic stressors that may be particularly harmful to children's cortisol reactivity. Understanding the role student-teacher relationships may play in moderating this risk will show how physiological risk may be reduced by supportive environmental factors that can be provided through Head Start.

**Sample:** 10-12 Head Start Teachers (per year of the study)

75 children from 10 Head Start Classrooms (per year of the study)

**Measures:**

*Child Measures:*

- Saliva samples
- Behavior during stress tasks
- Caregiver-Teacher Report Form (C-TRF)
- Penn Interactive Peer Play Scale (PIPPS)
- Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (S-TRS)

*Teacher Measures:*

- Demographics

*Parent Measures:*

- Chronic Stress Inventory
- Parenting Stress Index - Short Form (PSI-SF)