

# Interagency School Readiness Consortium, Research Partners

## Indiana University

*Project Title:*

Children's School Success

*Principal Investigator:*

Samuel Odom

*Project Funding Years:*

2003-2008

*Project Abstract:*

The primary goal of this research project is to investigate the effectiveness of an integrated curriculum model intended to prepare children for successful school entry (RFA-HD-03-03). This curriculum model, Children's School Success (CSS), was developed through a planning grant project that involved investigators, research experts, and community partners. The CSS curriculum model consists of academic, social, and individualization components that are well integrated and have a solid-base of scientific evidence documenting their effectiveness. The aims of this research project are a) to train teachers to implement the CSS intervention model, provide ongoing support for implementation, and assess fidelity of treatment for the intervention model, b) assess and analyze the immediate effect of the CSS intervention model on the learning and development of four-year-old children at risk for school failure, c) assess the effects of the intervention model on children's success in early elementary school years and d) determine the contextual characteristics of children, families, teachers, and organizations that affect fidelity of treatment and outcomes for children. The project will take place in 60 classrooms at five regional locations (CA, IN, KS, MD, WV) and involve approximately 600 children. These classrooms are located in Head Start, State Pre-K, and public school preschool programs. Children at risk for failure when entering the public schools are defined as four-year-old children living in poverty, children with identified disabilities, and children who are English Language Learners. A randomized group design will be employed in which teachers/ classrooms are randomly assigned to conditions. Children in the experimental (i.e., receiving CSS Curriculum) and control (i.e. receiving typical curriculum in classroom) groups will be assessed with a battery of language, academic and social assessments at the

beginning and end of the preschool year. Each spring, academic achievement and social assessments information, as well as school referral and placement information will be collected. To investigate the effects of institutional, personnel, and cultural variables on the implementation of the curriculum and effects for children, a cross-site case study analysis will be conducted. In addition, a comparison of costs of the CSS curriculum implementation relative to the standard curriculum in the preschool programs will be conducted.

## **Pennsylvania State University**

*Project Title:*

Head Start REDI (Research-based, Developmentally Informed)

*Principal Investigator:*

Karen Bierman

*Project Funding Years:*

2003-2008

*Project Abstract:*

This project consists of the implementation and evaluation of a developmentally based intervention program integrated into existing Head Start programs in order to promote the school readiness of socioeconomically disadvantaged children. Forty Head Start classrooms will be randomly assigned to the enriched intervention Head Start (Head Start REDI - Research-based Developmentally Informed) or to "usual practice" Head Start. Using a longitudinal study design, a sample of 320 children will be assessed annually over a four-year period (pre-test at age 3; post-test at age 4; follow-up assessments at age 5 and age 6, at the end of kindergarten and first-grade, respectively). The developmental trajectories and early elementary school adjustment of 160 children attending 20 Head Start-REDI classrooms will be compared to those of 160 children attending 20 "usual practice" Head Start classrooms. The enrichment intervention will utilize brief lessons, "hands on" extension activities, and specific teaching strategies linked empirically with the promotion of: 1) language development and emergent literacy skills, and 2) social-emotional competencies. Take-home materials will be provided to parents to enhance support for skill development at home and to foster parent-teacher involvement. Assessments of child outcomes will include multi-method, multi-informant measures of child social-emotional competencies, oral language skills, emergent literacy skills, cognitive abilities, and behavior problems. Teaching processes will be measured to assess program fidelity

and relation to child outcomes. Analyses will assess: 1) the impact of intervention on child skill development and later school adjustment and achievement, 2) the relation between teaching practices (intervention fidelity and general teaching strategies) and child skill development and school adjustment, 3) the potential moderation of intervention effects by child characteristics, 4) the potential mediation of school adjustment by preschool gains in child language/literacy skills and social-emotional competencies, and 5) the use and impact of parent take-home materials. In addition, the proposed project will include activities designed to promote the sustainability and dissemination of the intervention.

## **University of California, Los Angeles**

*Project Title:*

Exploring Los Angeles County Early Learning Settings

*Principal Investigator:*

Carollee Howes

*Project Funding Years:*

2003-2008

*Project Abstract:*

This longitudinal study documents the experiences of 3-to 5-year-old children from low-income families in Los Angeles County, CA, in three types of integrative early childhood intervention settings, and assesses the impacts of these interventions on children's early learning in cognitive, language, and social-emotional domains. The study examines specific instructional practices and philosophies, emotional climate, global quality, and caregiver-child relationships in these intervention settings for children at-risk for school difficulties due to low-income and/or English-language-learner status. The three types of intervention settings are publicly-funded center-based programs (such as Head Start and school district early education programs), private non-profit preschools, and family day care networks, all selected because of their focus on serving low-income families, and their focus on improving children's cognitive and social development. Individual children in these three settings, and in a comparison group sampled from waitlists for these services, were observed in their intervention settings and assessed individually to track their development over time in cognitive, language, and social-emotional domains. Analyses will compare development over time for children in intervention and comparison groups, as well as assessing the specific impacts of different instructional practices and intervention features within and across intervention settings. In addition, a cost analysis was

conducted, to assess the costs associated with approaches to improving the development of these at-risk children. The longitudinal study includes 300 children and their parents, caregivers, and teachers, followed from age 3 into and through kindergarten. Children in intervention and control groups will be followed over time into whatever early learning setting they attend. The purpose of the study is to identify specific instructional practices and approaches that have the potential to meaningfully enhance children's development prior to school entry, setting the stage for a successful transition into kindergarten, and reducing the likelihood that these at-risk children will be under-prepared for formal schooling.

## University of Chicago

### *Project Title:*

Emotions Matter: Classroom-based Integrated Intervention

### *Principal Investigator:*

C. Cybele Raver

### *Project Funding Years:*

2003-2008

### *Project Abstract:*

The principal aim of the proposed research is to improve low-income preschool-aged children's school readiness by decreasing their risk for behavioral problems through a set of classroom-based interventions. The following study, entitled the Chicago School Readiness Project will determine whether emotionally- and behaviorally-focused interventions in preschool have a significant long-term impact on children's academic achievement in 1st grade (as measured by school records) as well as on short-term language, pre-literacy, emotional, and behavioral outcomes, in the preschool and Kindergarten years. In the proposed research, 18 Head Start sites in Chicago, IL (with 602 children enrolled in 35 classrooms) were randomly assigned a control group (with receipt of support from a teacher's aide) or to a multi-component classroom intervention that included extensive teacher training (Webster-Stratton, et al, 2002) and weekly mental health consultation. Our hypothesis was that the emotional climate of treatment-assigned classrooms could be improved and that children's emotional, behavioral, and academic difficulty could be reduced through appropriate service delivery, support and referral within early educational settings (Donahue, et al. 2000). In addition, it is expected that the intervention's effect sizes will be substantially affected by two moderating influences, including 1) family and community levels of cumulative risk, and 2) the

degree to which programs are implemented, conceptualized as "dosage" of treatment administered in each setting. In short, what intervention approaches represent the wise investment in young children's chances for later school success? Does the CSRP intervention model offer long-term benefits to young children's emotional and behavioral adjustment and later school readiness? The research outlined in this application will answer these pressing empirical questions using direct assessments of children's emotional and behavioral adjustment, language and pre-literacy skills. This project's use of direct child assessments will be complemented by the inclusion of parent and teacher report, children's grades, use of special services, and standardized achievement test scores from preschool through 1 grade.

## **University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

*Project Title:*

Parent Engagement and Child Learning Birth to Five

*Principal Investigator:*

Susan M. Sheridan

*Project Funding Years:*

2003-2008

*Project Abstract:*

This study investigates the effects of a comprehensive intervention that integrates parent engagement and relationship components into a community-based early education program for children aged 0-5. It integrates a strong conceptual basis focusing on the context of close relationships between parents, children and professionals, with innovative service delivery models of consultation (triadic, McCollum & Yates, 1994; and conjoint, Sheridan, Kratochwill, & Bergan, 1996) in an intervention that addresses both child learning and parent engagement. The objective of this study is to carefully evaluate the benefits of a multicomponent child- and parent-focused intervention that addresses both home and center/school environments. Through ongoing coaching and professional development, the intervention is designed to improve the skills of intervention agents to increase early and sustained parent engagement across multiple social and learning contexts. Specific research aims are to: (1) evaluate the effects of an innovative, comprehensive service delivery system on child cognitive, behavioral, and socioemotional outcomes, in comparison to the present conventional system for children under 5 years of age; (2) assess the impact of the proposed comprehensive intervention on parental engagement (i.e., warmth/sensitivity, support for child's autonomy, and active participation in

learning and literacy); and (3) evaluate the extent to which child outcomes are mediated by changes in parental engagement. To address the extent to which children's cognitive, socioemotional, and behavioral functioning and parent engagement can be enhanced by the multicomponent intervention, we are using a randomized design to evaluate the intervention's impact on key outcomes predictive of school success. Additional analyses will specifically examine: (1) child and family factors that modify the intervention effects; (2) components of the intervention, especially its timing at the ages of 0-3 versus 3-5, that affect the outcomes on children and families; and (3) the longitudinal pattern of change within each child. We will model the between-groups and within-child trajectories to better understand the timing and nature of changes indicating school readiness. The approach is designed to advance the research base from one that focuses simply on "child readiness" for school to one that addresses "parent and child readiness" to engage in schooling across the early childhood spectrum and transitions across contexts.

## **University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill**

*Project Title:*

Evaluation of an Integrated Program for School Readiness

*Principal Investigator:*

Janis Kupersmidt

*Project Funding Years:*

2003-2008

*Project Abstract:*

The primary goal of the proposed intervention is to conduct a longitudinal effectiveness trial of a multimodal, integrated preschool program designed to improve children's school readiness by promoting pre-literacy, communication, mathematics and socioemotional skills in children at risk for school difficulties. The proposed intervention program consists of a variety of integrated curriculum materials and training methods including intensive teacher training workshops, individual on-site technical assistance with formalized protocols, specific math and pre-literacy classroom activities, and individual primer/booster sessions for a subgroup of aggressive children. Children living in a low-income family or community are at particularly high risk for school failure and constitute the primary target population for this project. The sample includes children attending Head Start and community child care programs. Teachers were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: Control, Workshops Only, or Workshops Plus. Teachers in both

treatment conditions will receive 30 hours of group-based teacher training. Teachers in the Workshops Plus condition will additionally receive on-site technical assistance consisting of individual consultation and mentoring. Teacher outcomes are assessed in baseline, intervention, and maintenance years. Child assessments are conducted in the fall and spring of the intervention year and after the children have made the transition to kindergarten. The outcomes of the proposed research will inform teachers, program directors, and policymakers as they make important decisions about the directions and expansion of early childhood efforts in the U.S.

## University of Pennsylvania

*Project Title:*

Evidence-based Program for the Integration of Curricula (EPIC): A Comprehensive Initiative for Low-Income Preschool Children

*Principal Investigator:*

John Fantuzzo

*Project Funding Years:*

2003-2008

*Project Abstract:*

The literacy and early developmental problems facing low-income preschool children seriously threaten their academic achievement and social adjustment. Such problems are among the most longstanding and important issues in educational and developmental research and practice. Increased attention to the preschool years has spotlighted this period of life as a critical time for developing skills needed to be successful in school. Low-income preschool children are disproportionately at risk for developmental lags and poor school performance-problems exacerbated in urban settings with widespread poverty and limited institutional resources. Over the past 10 years, researchers have sought to ameliorate these problems by considering how to link early literacy and learning to broad dimensions of children's psychosocial well-being and socio-cultural context. However, despite the dire need, there have been too few attempts to integrate these different areas of inquiry in early childhood development or to examine the interactions between and among them through rigorous multivariate, longitudinal study of evidence-based integrative curricula. In this application, we draw upon a developmental ecological conceptual framework to address these limitations in the existing literature. The primary aim of this application is to conduct a series of studies that will additively connect previously isolated areas of research and theory into a fully-integrated early literacy, numeracy, and

social/emotional adjustment curriculum for low-income preschool children living in diverse, high-risk urban settings. The integrated curriculum will be developed, tested, and refined in partnership with researchers and practitioners. It will be built upon empirical research in three focal areas: (1) early literacy and language, (2) early numeracy and (3) social/emotional adjustment, with special attention to foundational approaches to learning and emotional development, and to the differential family, classroom, and neighborhood contexts within which development occurs. The integrated curricula will be formed and tested in four consecutive phases: parallel curricula integration phase (year 1), parallel randomized field trials phase (year 2), full curricular integration phase (year 3), and randomized longitudinal experiment phase (years 4-5). The strength of this application is its integration of these areas of research in such a way that applications are configured practically to the real preschool classroom environment, and the families and cultures of urban Head Start children. Overall, the project's goals are (a) to develop an evidence-based integrated early literacy, numeracy, and social/emotional adjustment curriculum, and (b) to conduct a randomized, longitudinal experiment that will investigate the efficacy of the integrated curriculum in alternative forms and across multiple preschool settings, using state-of-the-art research methods.

## University of Virginia

*Project Title:*

Web-training: PreK Teachers, Literacy, and Relationships

*Principal Investigator:*

Robert C. Pianta

*Project Funding Years:*

2003-2008

*Project Abstract:*

Large-scale observational studies of pre-kindergarten classrooms indicate overall mediocrity and a high degree of variability in classroom quality and practices, even when experienced, credentialed teachers use the same curriculum. Most educators recognize that ongoing training and support for high quality implementation is critical to ensuring the value of early education experiences, particularly for children at-risk of early school failure. Thus the proposed project evaluates two conditions of Web-based training designed to support teachers' implementation of an integrative curriculum in early literacy, oral language, and social relationship/self-regulation skills in state-funded week classrooms. Two models of training will be implemented

for 2 years and compared in this longitudinal study: (1) Web-Training, in which teachers (N=110) receive workshop training in the curriculum and have access to a Website with additional material and examples, and (2) Web-Consultancy, in which teachers (N=110) receive the same workshop and training as the other condition but who also receive weekly, live, Internet-mediated consultation focused on implementing the curriculum. The Web-Consultancy condition provides teachers with direct feedback on lessons they implement and consultation about how to improve quality of implementation. Six school divisions will be randomly assigned to these two conditions (3 each) and all pre-k teachers in those divisions will be enrolled in one condition for 2 consecutive academic years. Observations of classroom quality and teaching practices will be collected regularly during the two intervention years and in a third non-intervention follow-up year. In each intervention year 4 children will be randomly selected from each pre-k teacher's classroom (N=1,760 total) and administered direct assessments in language and literacy. Pre-k teachers and observations provide information on social relationships and self-regulation for these children. The entire pre-k population will be assessed using teacher report of literacy, language, and relationships/regulation as a no treatment control. All children (those in the 2 experimental conditions and those in the population control) will be followed into kindergarten and first grade with teacher questionnaires assessing language, literacy, and social relationships/regulation. We hypothesize that children in both treatment conditions will show greater growth in child outcomes through first grade and that the Web-Consultancy group will show a significantly greater rate of growth than will the Web-Training (and no-treatment) groups. We further hypothesize that the differences in child outcomes between the Web Consultancy and Web Training groups will be mediated by higher quality implementation of the curriculum as a function of exposure to the Web Consultancy. The results of this study have direct implications for the importance of training and implementation as a key factor enhancing school readiness, apart from curriculum, and provide information on the effectiveness of delivering training at-scale over the Internet.