September 2003, Volume 17, No. 3

University of Pittsburgh
Office of Child Development

Developments

Serving children and families by promoting
Interdisciplinary education and research • University-community programs • Dissemination

OCD and Russian Colleagues Report

In Russian Orphanages, Children Improve When Family-Like Atmosphere Is Created

A family-like atmosphere, some attention, and a stable relationship with a few adults is improving the mental, socio-emotional, and physical development of children in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, orphanages during the first years of an experiment that has implications, not only for Russian orphanage practices, but for American children in foster care and the millions who spend long hours in unregulated home care.

The outcomes in the Russian Federation are the result of a U.S.-St. Petersburg collaboration that trained caregivers in child development basics and other skills and oversaw changes within the orphanages that afforded children the consistency of having only a few caregivers in their young lives. Over the course of three years, experts from the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, Russia's St. Petersburg State University, Center for Inclusion, and a St. Petersburg orphanage, Baby Home 13, were able to create a nurturing environment in which young children are more likely to thrive than simply survive.

"The interventions are an attempt to change the culture of the institution from the very business-like, regimented, scheduled, detached care of children that is typical of orphanages in many countries to one that allows caregivers

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IN THIS ISSUE

Early Head Start

Training Neighbors And Relatives To Raise The Quality Of Child Care

Quality child care is a service many parents want and need, but often find scarce. To boost the availability of quality child care in certain western Pennsylvania neighborhoods, Family Foundations Head Start is training neighbors and relatives who have become a significant, if unlicensed, source of child care for many parents who work.

For several years, Family Foundations Early Head Start (EHS) has collaborated with formal child care providers to help improve the quality of child care available to the 20% of EHS families who supplement EHS with formal care arrangements.

But another 20% rely on neighbors and relatives to care for their children. These informal providers, while often competent in many ways, usually have little training in important aspects of child care, such as knowing the basics of early childhood and how to create a developmentally-appropriate environment for children.

"Our families tend not to use the formal child care system," said Emie Tittnich, a Child Development Specialist with the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development. "We've been wrestling with how to engage these people who are providing care for the children of our families, but who aren't in any kind of formal system in which they receive resources, such as training."

Home-based care – a category that includes family home, group home, and arrangements with neighbors or

*(**Quality** continued on Page 2)*

*(**Quality** continued from Page 1)*

relatives – is the most widely used type of preschool-age child care in Pennsylvania and the nation.

About 20 women participated in the first year of the EHS training program, which is funded by the Head Start State Collaborative and intended to sharpen their care-giving skills, improve their understanding of child development, and provide resources and support. About one-third of the women are expected to become Department of Public Welfare-registered child care providers.

Quality Is Critical

Four decades of research strongly suggests that quality early childhood programs can improve a child's chances of succeeding in school and later in life. Quality early child care and education is associated with school achievement, less grade retention, higher graduation rates, fewer behavior problems at school, and lower rates of crime and delinquency among adolescents.

But only high-quality early childhood services achieve such benefits. Unfortunately, most child care and early education programs in Pennsylvania fail to offer the kind of environments that tap the full potential of early learning.

In 2002, the Universities Children's Policy Collaborative reported findings from a survey in Pennsylvania that showed lower-than-adequate quality among all but 20% of the state's child care and early education programs. The quality of home-based providers, including arrangements with neighbors and relatives, was lower on average than center-based programs. Legally unregulated/relative/ neighbor care had the lowest average quality scores of all of the types of early care and education.

Many parents turn to relatives and neighbors for child care when they are unable to find or afford other types of care for the children. In recent years, more and more low income parents have entered the workforce, increasing the demand for child care in their neighborhoods.

Family Foundations EHS found that many parents choose neighbors or relatives to care for their children when they first begin to use child care simply because they trust the informal care system. As the children get older, it is not unusual for them to use formal, regulated child care.

But in some communities, families use neighbors or relatives because the number of quality child care options is limited or quality care is not accessible for reasons that include lack of transportation or inconvenient hours. In McKees Rocks, for example, a family child care home and a group home used by EHS families are both full. Families looking for small group settings or care close to their homes may be disappointed.

An Offer Of Training

Family Foundations EHS and the YWCA Child Care Partners collaborated to identify informal child care providers serving EHS families who would be interested in creating a partnership to upgrade and stabilize their service.

Training informal care providers is expected to increase the availability of quality care for EHS families and allow parents to have children cared for close to home and by people familiar to them. Parents would get more choices of quality care. Informal child care providers would upgrade their services, become registered with the Department of Public Welfare, and earn more money by commanding a higher reimbursement rate as a registered family child care provider.

Providers in the program serve the Family Foundations EHS communities of Sto-Rox and Clairton, in Allegheny County, and the Hill District and East Liberty neighborhoods of Pittsburgh.

They are offered training in appropriate developmental practices and are eligible for materials and small equipment that helps them create good child care environments. They are also offered curriculum support, technical assistance, and on-site support, including help managing the behaviors of children – a common and often difficult issue for most child care providers.

"We've learned a lot more about how children learn, and caregivers should have access to that information to take advantage it," Tittnich said. "Having appropriate materials and knowing what to do is important. And everybody who cares for children can use some kind of support."

About half of the women who started the training program completed the first year and seven of them – about one third of the number initially enrolled – are expected to become registered providers with the state. A second year is planned to continue working with those providers who finished the first, helping them toward their goal of becoming registered and integrated into the professional

*(**Quality** continued on Page 10)*

Developments is a quarterly publication of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, which is solely responsible for its content. The Office is a program of the School of Education and is sponsored by the Howard Heinz Endowment, the Richard K. Mellon Foundation, the University of Pittsburgh, and the School of Education, and is co-directed by Christina J. Groark, PhD and Robert B. McCall, PhD. ***Developments*** is edited and written by Jeffery Fraser and produced by Mary Louise Kaminski at the Office of Child Development, University of Pittsburgh, 400 North Lexington Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15208. **Phone**: (412) 244-5421; **Fax**: (412) 244-5440; **E-Mail:**mlkam@pitt.edu; **Internet**: www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/.

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to love these kids, to be like a family," said Robert B. McCall, Ph.D., Co-Director of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development (OCD).

Children were not the only ones to gain from the project, which is supported by grants from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) and The Howard Heinz Endowments. Researchers report that caregivers made the transition from traditional practice to new ways of caring for children and appear to be better off psychologically for it.

Russia's Baby Homes

The project involved three St. Petersburg orphanages for children birth to 4 years. Each offered adequate medical care, nutrition, safety, hygiene, toys and play equipment, specialized equipment for children with disabilities, adult contact hours, and staff:child ratios.

For decades, however, Russia's baby homes have been operated by local Ministries of Health, which emphasize medical and health care, but pay less attention to the socio-emotional and psychological development of the young children. Practices within the orphanages are intended to promote conformity and discipline, and most learning activities are completely adult-directed.

"There are some old ideas about children," said Oleg I. Palmov, a special education teacher and On-Site Manager of the project. "It was believed they were a blank sheet of paper and the adults had to write everything on it. It was also believed that adults have to decide everything for the child."

In the baby homes, children are typically segregated into homogeneous groups by age and whether or not they have a disability. Caregivers respond little to the children, even when they cry. Relationships rarely develop between caretakers and children.

Older children typically play by themselves, rarely interacting with one another. Little affect is expressed by children or caregivers. Smiles and laughter are uncommon. Infants greet strangers without emotion. Older children may be aggressively and indiscriminately friendly toward a stranger or withdrawn. On the playground, it is not unusual to see groups of children standing idle not 10 feet from an equally idle caregiver.

Children are put to bed whether tired or not and often lay in their cribs quietly awake. For the U.S. team, the quiet was quickly noticed. "When we started to come to the baby homes, we'd say, 'Why is there no crying?'" said Christina J. Groark, OCD Co-Director. The answer: crying for these children did not earn them attention.

The St. Petersburg team knew they needed to address the psychological, social, and emotional needs of these children. They had implemented several interventions in a non-government preschool, the Center for Inclusion, which has been recognized for excellence by the Russian government. Their success encouraged them to advocate for similar changes throughout the orphanage system – an ambitious undertaking in a field in which change is difficult, resources scarce, and reform ranks low on the list of the country's social or political priorities.

The Project

It was clear that children would benefit from having more developmentally-appropriate care and fewer caregivers. OCD researchers and their Russian colleagues implemented two basic interventions designed to create those conditions.

· Training to promote more warm, sensitive, responsive care giving.

· Changes in staffing patterns and other structural changes to promote positive relationships between children and caregivers. The key was to provide fewer caregivers in the lives of children, who typically would have had 60 to 100 different caregivers over their first two years of life.

In one orphanage, Baby Home 13, caregivers were trained and structural changes implemented. In a second home, caretakers were trained, but no structural changes were implemented. A third orphanage received neither, essentially operating as it had in the past.

Children's physical, mental, language, and social-emotional development are being assessed. How caregivers responded to the interventions was also of interest, so their job satisfaction, attitudes toward children, anxiety, and depression are being assessed.

Children typically arrive at the baby homes from hospitals not long after they are born. As many as 60% are considered at risk, but may not exhibit symptoms. The rest have clear disabilities, including infants of very low birth weight, genetic disorders, such as Down Syndrome, and diagnosed medical and physical disorders, such as cerebral palsy, fetal alcohol syndrome, and hearing and vision impairments. More than 70% of all children are physically or

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mentally delayed.

Baby home caregivers include professionals, such as pediatricians and neuropathologists, and "special teachers," whose role is similar to special education teachers in the U.S., but who are typically trained to treat older children. Other specialists provide focused services, such as massage, physical education, and music. The responsibilities of "assistant teachers," "medical nurses," and "nursery nurses" range from the behavioral and educational development of the children to their health care. These workers generally have 8-10 years of general education plus up to four years of specialized training, often specific to working with older children. In fact, the direct care staff typically have little, if any, training specific to infants and toddlers.

Training

The detached manner in which caregivers work with children in the orphanage is common in institutions around the world. For many, avoiding relationships with the children is a way to protect their hearts from being broken. "It is very hard when your favorites leave," said one special education teacher in Baby Home 13. "It is a little part of your soul, part of your heart goes with them. But when a child goes to an orphanage with very poor conditions it is very sad. It's especially sad when you know he could die there."

Through training, the project hoped to teach caregivers the basics of child development and the practical aspects of the care and education of young children. Changing the institutional culture to one that caregivers behaved more like parents than emotionally-detached employees was another goal.

American training specialist, Dr. Jackie Dempsey, President of Early Childhood International in Pittsburgh, guided the training, first training baby home professionals who then trained their caregiver colleagues. The training was designed to:

· Encourage caretakers to be more affectionate, warm, and sensitively responsive to children's overtures.

· Promote independence and creativity to balance with obedience and conformity.

· Engage children with a range of disabilities in ways that allow them to more fully participate in daily activities and build relationships with caregivers and other children.

Structural Changes

In Baby Home 13, several structural changes were made to promote a more family-like environment and to encourage more responsive child care. For example:

· Group size was reduced to allow caregivers to treat children more individually. Groups of 12-14 children were divided into two subgroups.

· Changes were made so that children are cared for by a smaller and more stable set of caregivers than before. For example, a new Primary Caregiver position was created and two Primary Caregivers were assigned exclusively to each subgroup of children. As a result, children are cared for by six rather than nine different caregivers during the daytime in a week, a 33% reduction.

· "graduations" to new caregivers at various ages during the first two years of life were stopped, reducing by60%-80% the number of different caregivers a child experiences over the first two years of life.

· Subgroups of children were integrated by age and disability status to improve the development of children with disabilities without slowing the development of other children, and to give caregivers opportunities to pay more attention to individual children. Caregivers, for example, are now able to play with older children when infants sleep.

· Additional furniture and equipment were provided to each subgroup of children. The large group cribs and play pens which held children who were too often ignored were eliminated.

Caregivers Show Improvements

Before the changes in Baby Home 13, caregivers were found to have relatively high rates of anxiety, a few of them were seriously depressed, and some had negative attitudes toward their work. "It is emotionally very hard for them to work with these children who were refused by their own parents, refused by society," said Rifkat Muhamedrahimov, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Developmental Psychology at the St. Petersburg State University.

When the new interventions were discussed, many caregivers voiced concern that the changes would mean more work and they would not be able to cope with working with a group of children of mixed ages and disabilities.

In fact, adjustment to the changes was less traumatic than they anticipated. And caregivers, as a group, showed decreased levels of anxiety and depression, according to preliminary data as of May of this year. Caregivers became less traditional in their work with children – they showed

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Reducing Class Size In School: How Effective Are Smaller Classes And Other Policy Considerations

Special Report

University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development
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When educators and policymakers debate ways to improve student achievement in school, reducing class size is often at the top of their list. Is reducing class size effective? A growing body of research-based evidence suggests that it is, particularly during the critical early grades.

Not all questions regarding the effectiveness of reducing class size have been answered. There is, for example, the lack of a theoretical understanding of how class size affects student performance, and some studies report little or no meaningful change, particularly studies that involve smaller samples and rely on non-experimental design.

The most scientifically-rigorous studies, however, report that children benefit when class sizes are reduced. Benefits, in some cases, have been immediate and long lasting. Perhaps the most noteworthy example of such outcomes is Project STAR in Tennessee, one of the largest class size experiments in the nation and one of the most thoroughly investigated.

Nearly every state has at one time considered legislation to help schools reduce class size. More than 20 states have adopted such legislation. Federal legislation was passed in 1999 to help local schools hire 100,000 qualified teachers over seven years to reduce class size in grades 1-3 to a national average of 18 students per class. In Pennsylvania, three bills pending in the state House and Senate offer certain school districts incentives to reduce class size.

Effectiveness Of Reducing Class Size

Many different approaches have been taken to studying the impact of reducing the size of classes in schools. Most studies are of non-experimental design. Recently, however, a number of more carefully controlled experimental studies have looked at reducing class size and offer more reliable data on the effectiveness of such policies.

Analyses Of Existing Studies

Several analyses of smaller class sizes have been done using a variety of methods to draw conclusions through reviews of already existing research. Major analyses report a range of findings. For example:

· A 1978 *meta-analysis* combined the findings of 77 empirical studies on class size and achievement. A second analysis looked at the relationship between class size and other outcomes. The analyses reported that small classes are associated with higher achievement at all grade levels, especially when students are in small classes for more than 100 hours, and when student assignment is carefully controlled. Major benefits were seen in classes with fewer than 20 students. The second study also found better student reactions, teacher morale, and quality of the instructional environment in smaller classes.[1]

· A 1986 review of 100 class size studies reported that the clearest evidence that smaller classes benefit children is found in the primary grades. It also reported that smaller classes particularly benefit disadvantaged and minority students, and that benefits are influenced by whether or not teachers adjust teaching methods and classroom procedures to the smaller classes. The review grouped similar kinds of research studies, such as studies of the same grade level, subject area, or student characteristics. [2]

· Small gains among students were noted in a 1989 study that analyzed empirical studies that met three criteria: a study was included only if class size had been reduced for at least a year, classes of fewer than 20 students were compared to substantially larger classes, and students in the larger and smaller classes were comparable. The reported gains, however, did not last beyond the children's' small-class experience.[3]

· Smaller classes were not found to have an appreciable effect on student performance in a research analysis that examined trend data from the 1950s to 1986. No consistent relationship between class size and standardized test scores was reported. The review combined students from all grade levels and relied on student/teacher ratios to measure class size, rather than actual class sizes.[4]

Several limitations of the analytic approach to assessing the impact of class size are serious enough to warrant caution when considering the findings of the studies. These shortcomings include a reliance on student/teacher ratios as a measure for class size rather than actual class size; grouping the data for all grade levels together; and using data that represent student achievement at the school level or school district average scores, rather than the scores of individual

students placed in larger or smaller classes.[5]

Recent experimental studies of class size offer findings drawn from more rigorous approach in which attention is paid to the specific experiences and outcomes of children in smaller classes. The largest class size reduction experiment, Tennessee's *Project STAR* (Student-Teacher Achievement Ratio), and two associated data collections, have made important contributions to the quality of research evidence concerning the influence smaller classes has on children.

Project STAR

In Project STAR, students in the smaller classes were found to outperform students in larger classes, regardless of whether or not the teachers in larger classes had aides to help them. Later studies suggest these gains were long-lasting.

Project STAR began in 1985 as a four-year longitudinal study of kindergarten, first-, second-, and third-grade classrooms in Tennessee. Classes of 13-17 students were compared with classes of 22-26 students, both with and without an additional instructional aide in the larger classes. Teachers did not receive any training related to teaching in smaller classes.

The study's findings are considered particularly important because unlike most class size studies, Project STAR embraced the essential features of a controlled research experiment designed to produce reliable evidence about the effects of intervention.

For example, the study was large in terms of schools studied: 79 schools, more than 300 classrooms, and 7,000 students. Students were studied through four years. Teachers and students were randomly assigned to the three different kinds of classes. Steps were taken to eliminate possible influences from variations in the quality of the participating schools that might affect the quality of the classroom activity.

Several gains among students who attended the smaller classes in their early grades were reported.[6]

· Smaller class students substantially outperformed larger class students on Stanford Achievement Tests and the curriculum-based Basic Skills First test – regardless of their race or whether they were from urban, suburban, or rural schools.

· The positive achievement effect of smaller classes on minority students was double that for majority students initially, and later was about the same.

· A smaller proportion of students in the smaller classes was retained in-grade, and there was more early identification of students' special educational needs.

· There were no significant differences in academic achievement for students in the larger classes with or without an additional instructional aide.

Children in smaller classes during the early grades continued to do well after they returned to normal-sized classes, according to the follow-up study, Lasting Benefits. In fourth grade, for example, students from the smaller classes still outperformed the students from the larger classes in all academic subjects. They were better behaved and, at least through eighth grade, performed at a higher academic level.[7]

Smaller classes in the early grades are also associated with increased likelihood that children will aspire to enroll in a college or university after high school. A follow-up analysis of Project STAR students reported that for high school seniors, nearly 44% of those who had been assigned smaller classes in the early grades took either the SAT or ACT exam, compared to 40% of those who had been assigned a regular class. Among African-American students, the likelihood of them taking the test increased 25%, from 31.7% to 40.2%. The gap between white and African-American students who take the exams was 54% smaller among students assigned to smaller classes.[8]

In 1990, Tennessee began Project Challenge, which offered smaller classes to kindergarten through third grade students in 16 school districts with the lowest family income levels and highest numbers of children who qualified for the federal free and reduced price lunch program. Three years later, the schools moved up in rankings based on statewide achievement test scores. In reading, for Project Challenge districts improved from 99th out of the state's 138 districts to 78th in the state. In math, Project Challenge districts improved from 85th in the state to 57th.[9]

Wisconsin's SAGE Program

Other large class size experiments report similar outcomes.

In Wisconsin, the goal of Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program is to have student/teacher ratios no greater than 15 to 1 in kindergarten, first grade, and second grade classes. The state began phasing in the smaller classes in 1996-1997 school year and studied the outcomes, comparing students in the smaller classes to similar students in existing classrooms. A second-year evaluation reported several gains among children in the smaller classes.[10]

· First-grade students in the smaller classes performed consistently better than comparison students in mathematics, reading, language arts, and total scores for the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.

· The achievement gap narrowed between white and African-American first-grade students who were in the

smaller classes. The gap widened among white and African-American first-grade students who were in the larger classes.

· In second grade, academic achievement among students in smaller classes remained higher than that of students in larger classes. However, the difference did not increase substantially.

Although several of the findings are consistent with those seen in Project STAR, at least one important difference separates the two programs. Unlike Project STAR, class size reductions in SAGE were implemented with other changes, including use of a rigorous academic curriculum, before- and after-school activities for students, and professional development for teachers. The second-year evaluation, however, suggests such components have not had an impact on student achievement.

Policy Implications

In 1999, federal legislation provided U.S. public schools with more than $1.2 billion a year for programs that reduced class size in certain schools. After the first year, the Department of Education reported some 1.7 million children in the early grades receive instruction in smaller, more personalized classes; 90,000 teachers were teaching more manageably-sized classes; 23,000 schools – about one-third of the nation's elementary schools – had hired one or more new teachers; and 15,000 school districts had improved their recruiting and hiring of teachers, or had provided professional development to help teachers maximize the benefits of smaller classes.[11]

Nearly two decades of classroom experience and a growing body of research offer educators and policymakers some guidance when considering programs that seek to reduce class size as a way to improve the performance of students.

Which Grade To Target?

Most studies that report benefits from reducing class size suggest that small classes in the critical early grades, particularly kindergarten through third grade, lead to higher student achievement. In fact, many experiments, including Tennessee's Project STAR, focus on those early grades and have shown immediate improvement in student outcomes in addition to long-last benefits.

Researchers are more cautious about whether significant positive reducing class size in later grades yield significant improvements in student performance.

How Small Is Small Enough?

Studies suggest that the most successful experiments are those that drop class size below a certain threshold. No "magic number" is prescribed. However, research indicates that class size must at least be lowered to fewer than 20 students if improvements are to be seen. Reducing class size from 30 to 25, for example, will likely produce little or no improvement. In Project STAR, students in classes with fewer than 18 students did better than students in larger classes.

Lower students-to-teacher ratios do not always result in smaller classes. Some initiatives, for example, allow officials to include other education staff other than teachers when calculating the ratio, such as resource teachers in special education, music, and physical education. In such cases, class size may not actually be reduced. In Project STAR, for example, larger classes with instructional aides did *not* produce the same benefits as the smaller classes.

Reducing class size across the board may not be necessary to improve student achievement. It may, for example, be more important and less costly to reduce the size of reading classes and not physical education classes. Studies also suggest that certain student populations, such as minority and disadvantaged students, benefit most from smaller classes.

Cost Of Smaller Classes

The cost of reducing class size varies widely and is influenced by a number of factors. An analysis of a simulation of class size reduction in seven Florida school districts offers a "rule of thumb" estimate of the costs involved. At a classroom cost of $53,000, the per student cost for reducing class size from 24 to 20 students is $435. The cost doubles when the class enrollment is dropped to 17 and triples when the class size is reduced from 24 to 15 students.

Studies suggest some reimbursement strategies are less efficient that others. In California, for example, schools received a flat per student reimbursement, regardless of the effort and expense required to reduce class sizes. For some, it was a financial boon. For others, it was a financial strain. Districts that already had relatively small classes were reimbursed $650 per student when their actual costs were minimal. Other districts with large class sizes and fewer resources to accommodate more classrooms received the same $650 per student reimbursement, but spent closer to $1,000 per student to reduce class sizes.[12]

Impact On Teacher Supply

The availability of teachers, particularly quality teachers, may be affected when class size is reduced. Some states already face serious shortages of teachers. Pennsylvania has no shortage of teachers overall, but is experiencing spot shortages – a need for teachers of certain subjects, such as the sciences and higher mathematics; some rural and urban school districts struggle to find qualified teachers for open positions; minority teachers are underrepresented in public school classrooms.[13]

How class size policies will affect teacher supply over

the long term is unclear. If the supply of teachers remains the same, class size policies could exacerbate existing shortages by requiring more classes and a demand for additional teachers. Such circumstances could result in the hiring of less qualified teachers to meet the demand. In California, the quick implementation of class reduction policies led to the rapid addition of more than 29,000 teachers in three years, and a decline in the overall experience, education, and credential level of teachers in grades K–3. Even with such difficulties, the California program resulted in small gains in student performance.

Over the longer term, however, smaller classes might not diminish the quality of teachers or further weaken supply. Many teachers who now leave the classroom after only a few years to pursue other professions may find teaching in smaller classes more personally rewarding and stay in the schools longer.

Demand For Student Improvement

The most rigorous studies show that reducing class size is an educational reform that can result in improved student performance and long-lasting benefits, although some of the gains are small. Low-income and minority students tend to benefit the most and smaller classes have had their greatest impact on student achievement when implemented in the early grades.

Although the costs can be high, reducing class size is likely a policy that will continue to attract attention as school districts across the nation work to comply with the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, which requires districts to improve student performance in graduated steps. "School districts are going to be compelled to do some things they had not considered necessary to do in the past," said Ronald R. Cowell, President of The Education Policy and Leadership Center in Harrisburg, PA. "If school officials are faced with a significant learning gap with low-income children being at the bottom of that gap, and the research says those children can make significant improvement in school achievement in smaller classes, particularly in the early grades, I think school officials will look at that very seriously. In some instances, they will be desperately searching for something that works."

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Harvard's Heather Weiss

County's Family Support: Strong, Innovative, Ready To Face Future

After more than a decade in the making, Allegheny County's network of 33 family support centers is well positioned to face future challenges, such as how to expand its reach to contribute more toward building stronger schools and communities, said Heather Weiss, Ph.D., a family support pioneer and one of the nation's leading experts in the field.

Widespread involvement of parents in the leadership of centers, steady growth, adherence to quality standards, and a willingness to evaluate progress were among the strengths that has led the county-wide network to become a national model for family support, Weiss said in remarks made at the 10th annual Family Support Conference, held in June in Pittsburgh.

Dr. Weiss, Director of the Harvard Family Research Project at Harvard University's Graduate School of Education, said that by growing a network from a few centers, the Allegheny County movement accomplished what few thought possible in 1984, when early family support planners met for the first time in a national conference. "You have shown that it is possible to create a vibrant, sustainable set of family support programs linked with other services that are modeling this new way of doing business."

Important Accomplishments

The slow but steady growth of family support in Allegheny County has contributed to greater public recognition of the needs of families, the importance of families, and the need to support them, Dr. Weiss said. Just as important, policymakers and the public are more aware of family support, its role in the community, and its contributions.

"Developmental research is clearer and clearer about how family structure and processes influence child development," she said. "Places like the Office of Child Development at the University of Pittsburgh translate that knowledge into practices within family support. That means we're taking some of the latest available science and translating it into the ways we work with families so that they can support their children's development.

"We know how to develop high quality programs and you are teaching us how to bring them to scale so that every child gets quality family support."

The Allegheny County family support network also demonstrated that it is possible to build and sustain a movement, not simply a set of programs.

"In the beginning, family support was programs, these islands. Then, you had the mainland services," Dr. Weiss said. "In the last 20 years, particularly in the last 10 here in Pittsburgh, you have brought the islands to the mainland. We've attached to the mainland, we are infusing family support principles into the way human services, education, and health do business with families. We have operationalized what it means to think in a family-focused way."

The Allegheny County movement showed that it was possible to not just scale up programs into a significant network, but to maintain quality standards and strictly adhere to family support principles while doing it.

"It is no small thing to have 33 centers within this county," Dr. Weiss said. "It is a major accomplishment. It shows that America can scale up and sustain family support programs, you can operationalize a new way of doing business with families, you can build and can continue to build public will to pay for these services through taxes and through other community giving and philanthropy. And you can create genuine public-private partnerships.

"These are things we only dreamed about 20 years ago."

Widespread parent involvement is another strength that characterizes family support in Allegheny County and one that should serve communities well in the future, Dr. Weiss said. "You've developed a new generation of parent leaders and I think you will be seeing them as leaders and advocates for the next 10 to 20 years in this county. They will be on the school board. They will be in all kinds of places by virtue of your leadership training.

The county movement is also helping secure family support's future by having the will and the foresight to thoroughly evaluate family support, gathering process and outcome data that can be used to improve programs and make the case that family support is worth investing in. "I think the biggest challenge now facing child support nationally is evaluation and showing the value added by having family support services within the community," Dr. Weiss said.

Future Directions

Dr. Weiss urged a broadening of the family support role to include helping to strengthen communities as well as individuals. "Over the last two decades this fundamental family support premise has largely focused on individual family access to information and resources to attain individual goals. Less attention has been paid to the ways that families

*(**Weiss** continued on page 11)*

(**Orphanages** *continued from Page 4)*

less adult-dominated behavior and placed less emphasis on conformity and obedience. They also were more flexible when working with the children.

"The children really like it when the adults are on the floor with them," said a Baby Home 13 teacher. "I'm an old woman, but I enjoy feeling like I'm in my childhood again crawling with them on the carpet."

Child Outcomes Improve

The interventions in Baby Home 13 have already produced a number of encouraging gains among the young children who live there. For example, even after only 4-15 months of experiences with the double interventions:

· Children have improved on the Battelle. Developing children and children with moderate disabilities improved on the personal-social, communication, and cognitive subscales. Those showing improvement on every subscale and demonstrating the greatest gains – 35% to 63% – were children with severe disabilities, who had been the most neglected.

· Children's affect scores improved on the Infant Affect Manual, which rates the emotions of a child in certain situations. Positive ratings result from observed positive emotions such as joy, interest, excitement, and surprise.

· The physical growth of children improved. Children in Baby Home 13, where both training and structural changes were made, improved in height, weight, head circumference, and chest circumference as a result of the psychosocial interventions.

The Baby Home collaboration has emerged as one of the few quasi-experimental demonstrations of psychosocial short stature syndrome and strong evidence that growth and physical health can be enhanced by improving the psychosocial experience of children.

"We are seeing a good dynamic in the physical health of the children," said Natalia Nikoforova, M.D., Head Pediatrician and Director of Baby Home 13. "They are less ill. Babies throw up less. They are better overall in their health."

From the attitudes and behaviors of caregivers and children to the new-found warmth of Baby Home 13, the transformation of the orphanage has been dramatic. "When you walk in and hear the laughter when before it was quiet, to see that kind of change is very fulfilling," Dr. Groark said.

SOURCES FOR THIS ARTICLE include the following:

Progress Report. *The Effects of Improving Caregiving on Early Development: Baby Home #13, St. Petersburg, Russia*.

Faces of Promise and Hope (July 2003). Documentary video. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development. ■

(**Quality** *continued from Page 2)*

development network.

"What has really made this project effective is that the person providing the technical assistance is really serving as a mentor and case manager," Tittnich said. "Not only is she working with them on improving their practice, she's a liaison between the training and the women implementing it in their homes, she troubleshoots, and she hooks them into the system."

Meanwhile, the program is subject to an ongoing evaluation that will provide information on both process and outcome. The evaluation is expected to help identify factors such as those that support or impede attempts to train informal caregivers, characteristics of caregivers who are most likely to move into the formal care system, and characteristics of families who use informal care. ■

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(**Weiss** *continued from Page 9)*

and neighborhoods and communities can collectively use information as a tool for community-wide family strengthening activities.

"However, the growing momentum of civic participation in education, health, and welfare reform suggest the need to expand the notion of family support to include getting and using information for collective action. This signals changes in the way programs and professionals can support families with strategies such as families working together toward collective, rather than exclusively individual family strengthening goals."

One of the most significant challenges Dr. Weiss sees in the coming years is linking family support with the public schools to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes of local students. "Family support and education need to figure out ways to work together and continue parent involvement in family support through elementary school and well into and probably out of high school. It's an opportunity for both to grow together and improve the outcomes of kids."

Dr. Weiss said the definition of who family support serves also needs to be broadened over the next decade or two to embrace the entire family. "That means really engaging and working with fathers," she said. "I think that's a real goal for us in the next twenty years. We also need to think about working with families through adolescence. Kids need strong families and those families need communities that support them as they raise adolescents." ■

Announcements . . .

Free OCD Parenting Columns Well Suited For Newsletters

Dispensing parenting advice, long the domain of grandmothers and other family relations, is drawing more attention from policymakers and others looking for ways to strengthen families and communities – and for good reason. Studies show effective parenting improves a child's chances of healthy development.

Sound parenting advice on more than 50 topics is now available free of charge in a series columns written by Robert B. McCall, Ph.D., Co-Director of the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development and former columnist for *Parents* magazine.

The columns, well-suited for newsletters and community newspapers, provide clear, concise and accurate information on topics such as dealing with a child's lying, how to toilet train, what to do about nightmares, discipline and finicky eaters, and how to recognize and address grief in children.

OCD offers the columns free of charge as Microsoft Word documents, which can be viewed and downloaded from the Internet at: www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/columns.htm

The public service initiative is made possible by the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education, whose contributions support production of the columns and other Office of Child Development projects. ■

Parenting Guide Series Available From OCD

The University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development is offering a series of easy-to-use parenting guides offering information and advice on 50 parenting topics. These guides are available free of charge to parents and organizations, agencies and professionals who work with children and families.

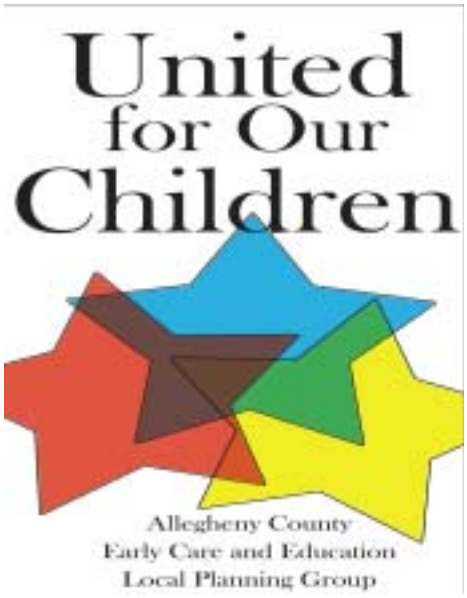
The You & Your Child parenting guide series, written and edited by the University of Pittsburgh Office of Child Development, covers topics ranging from how to deal with children's fears, finicky eating habits, and aggressive behavior to getting a child ready to read, setting rules, and coping with grief.

Each guide is based on current parenting literature and has been reviewed by a panel of child development experts and practitioners. The series is made possible by the Frank and Theresa Caplan Fund for Early Childhood Development and Parenting Education.

To receive a printed set of all 50 guides by mail, send a request along with your name, organization, mailing address and telephone number to:

Parenting Guides
University of Pittsburgh
Office of Child Development
400 North Lexington Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15208.

The You & Your Child parenting guides are also available on the Internet for downloading as portable document files at: www.pitt.edu/~ocdweb/guides.htm. ■



ALLEGHENY COUNTY LOCAL PLANNING GROUP (ACLPG) FOR EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

Background Information

The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) has funded a county-wide planning process that will result in increased and improved quality early care and education to support children entering school ready to learn, and that assures school age children are in appropriate before and after school activities.

These groups have been formed in every county in Pennsylvania so that eventually there will be local plans to improve early care and education in all areas of the state. It is expected that the state will integrate the ideas and activities of the local planning groups into any state-wide initiatives designed to address the needs of children and families, and the professionals who serve them.

The Allegheny County planning process began with a series of individual interviews of over 70 key stakeholders who serve children and families in many capacities. A report summarizing the findings of these interviews was completed in June 2002. The data-collection process is continuing with parents and providers to assess current needs as well as to gather ideas for improvement and change in early care and education. An ACLPG steering committee also meets regularly to nurture a spirit of dialogue and cooperation among agencies serving children and families.

Based on this data collection and information sharing phase of planning, the ACLPG will prepare a comprehensive written plan that will prioritize needs and outline specific strategies for improvement in the areas of capacity and quality early education programs, professional development for staff, public awareness and education, parent engagement, and service to children with special needs. The plan is due to the Pennsylvania DPW by June 30, 2003.

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