



Cornell Early Childhood Program



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To order copies or to submit an article, please contact Tim Dunlavy (tid26@cornell.edu).

Cornell University Research Update

New York's Universal Prekindergarten Program: Effects on Community-Based Program Sites, by Taryn Morrissey, Kristi Lekies, & Mon Cochran

In 1997, New York State passed legislation creating the Universal Prekindergarten Program (UPK). A main tenet of UPK legislation is that a minimum of 10% of UPK funds be channeled to community-based prekindergarten UPK sites. This requirement has led to the development of both school-based and community-based sites in most public school districts, thereby necessitating collaboration between the school district and community-based organizations (CBOs). A previous study found that 61% of UPK children in the New York City school districts surveyed and 51% of those in upstate programs were receiving UPK services in non-school, community-based settings.¹ The follow up study summarized in this report was designed to obtain a clearer understanding of New York's UPK program from the perspective of these local policy-makers and service providers.

Method

A survey was sent to 850 directors of CBO programs in most of the upstate New York and in New York City school districts that participated in the UPK program during the 2001-02 school year.² A total of 285 surveys (upstate = 104; NYC = 181) were returned, a response rate of 34%.

The survey gave program directors the opportunity to provide information within six general areas of interest: program description and demographics, the nature and process of involvement with UPK over time, staff and professional development opportunities and activities, effects on curriculum and other programming, financing issues, and overall impacts and assessment.

Findings

When asked why their community-based programs decided to participate in the UPK program, respondents cited two primary motivations: access to an additional source of revenue and the opportunity to improve program quality. Financing issues involved the amount of funding per child received by the program, the proportion of overall funding represented by the UPK allotment, the perceived adequacy of that funding, and the extent to which that income resulted in a fee reduction for the families being served. Quality indicators used in this study included teacher certification and salaries, teacher professional development activities, educational investments made with UPK funds, family involvement, and other positive UPK-related changes reported by directors.

¹ Lekies, K.S., & Cochran, M. (2001). *Collaborating for Kids: The New York State Universal Prekindergarten Program 1999-2000*. The Cornell Early Childhood Program, Department of Human Development, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY.

² These were those school districts that had been delivering UPK services since the inception of the program in 1998, and included all school districts in New York City and most of the big-city districts upstate.

The directors of CBO programs involved with UPK that responded to this survey expressed a high level of satisfaction with this relationship with school district. Most felt that the level of monitoring by the districts was appropriate, that constraints imposed by the district were reasonable, and that supports were considerable. Although there were some regional differences (NYC directors feeling more constraint than upstate; upstate directors wishing for more input into implementation decisions), overall feelings of satisfaction were very positive statewide. The substantive findings from this survey underscore the reasons for this satisfaction: the adequacy of UPK funding was associated with enriched classroom pedagogy and curricula, improved teacher salaries and strengthened professional development, more attention to parent and family involvement, and in many cases an overall reduction in parent fees (average range of 25-49% reduction in fees). The reduction in parent fees was possible due to the per child amount received by the school districts and passed along to the community-based programs. The amount passed along ranged from a low of less than \$2,000 to a high of \$3,500 or more.

A primary area of concern identified by respondents is the recruitment and retention of qualified lead teachers, especially those with state certification. Retention of qualified teachers is a problem because school district salaries are higher than in community-based programs. Salaries in comparable CBO programs in New York City are higher than in upstate programs. However, UPK teachers in community settings were making more than their counterparts in the same settings who were not teaching in UPK classrooms, although this difference was significant only in the upstate programs. A number of issues deserving future study were identified, including the substantial variation in per-child funding amounts passed along to CBOs by school districts, and the variation in parent fee reductions made by those local programs that charge parent fees.

For more information about the study, please contact:

Taryn Morrissey, Cornell Early Childhood Program, Department of Human Development, 607-255-2457, twm24@cornell.edu

County Update

Supporting Family Literacy through Parent Education Training Institute, by Nancy Olsen-Harbich

Many community programs in Suffolk County are focused on supporting and improving Family Literacy, particularly in families of children at high risk. Professionals and paraprofessionals in Family Literacy Programs need training in child development, parent education and literacy to work effectively with families and to design appropriate programs and activities for them. To meet this need Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County recently sponsored two weeklong training institutes entitled "Supporting Family Literacy through Parent Education."

With funding support from the Verizon Foundation, the Institutes were planned cooperatively between local extension educators (Nancy Olsen-Harbich, Tim Jahn, Kerri Reda) and Cornell faculty (Jennifer Birckmayer). In designing the training curriculum, CCE Educators used their extensive experience collaborating with the local agencies/programs including Public Libraries, Early Head Start, Even Start, Child Care Centers, and Parent-Child Home programs. They drew upon theoretical and research-based knowledge of child development in general and of literacy development in particular. Such research suggests that literacy development begins in the very early stages of childhood. It also provides an understanding of the literacy acquisition of young children and suggests strategies that can help children become successful, confident readers and writers. With the support of parents, caregivers, early childhood educators, and teachers, as well as exposure to a literacy-rich environment, children successfully progress from emergent to conventional reading.

The weeklong Institutes, held in July 2002 and July 2003, reached 50 individuals. Immediate feedback from participants at the conclusion of the Institutes underscored the success of the program as a professional training opportunity that can easily transcend to meet the needs of families in a multitude of formal and informal settings. Most participants felt the Institute was among the highest quality training programs they ever attended, combining both theoretical and practical knowledge important in their work with families. Pre and post-test surveys were administered to participants with the following results:

- Percent of participants who increased their knowledge of child development: 83%
- Percent of participants who increased their knowledge of family literacy: 86%
- Percent of participants who increased their knowledge of parent education: 92%

Each participant completed an action plan. Participants reported that they will share information on the following topics, covered at the Institute, with 10,487 parents, children and staff:

- Infant development
- Toddler development
- Brain development
- Temperament and child development
- Developmentally appropriate practice
- Best practices in early childhood education
- Emergent literacy
- Family literacy practices and strategies
- Importance of loving, warm parent-child relationships
- Importance of play in development
- Connection between play & learning
- Parent interaction and its effect on the child later in life
- Importance of having print material available at home
- Internet resources for parents
- Positive discipline
- Role of parent in emergent literacy

Contingent upon the receipt of additional funding, the training institute will next be offered **June 28 - July 2, 2004**. Participants must attend each day from 9am to 3pm. There is space for five participants from outside Suffolk County. CCE participants can attend the institute for free, but will be charged a materials fee and are responsible for travel to and lodging costs on eastern Long Island.

For more information about the Institute, please contact:

Nancy Olsen-Harbich, Extension Educator Suffolk County, 631-727-7850; no18@cornell.edu

New York State Update

NYS Infant Toddler Technical Assistance Network, by Evelyn Efinger

Late in 2002, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) provided funding to develop a network of Infant & Toddler Technical Assistance (TA) Centers across New York State. The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) agencies were asked to develop a plan with the Regional Office Manager in each of the seven regions of New York. Each region has a local twist, but the end result is 16 regional TA Centers full of information on best practices in infant and toddler care. Twenty two Infant Toddler (IT) Specialists have been hired by the lead CCRR agencies and a statewide Coordinator was hired at the NYS Child Care Coordinating Council in Albany.

New York State Infant Toddler Specialists

Region I – Niagara, Erie, Orleans, Genesee, Wyoming, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Allegany

Amy Bush/ Amanda Kelkenberg, The Child Care Coalition of the Niagara Frontier (716-877-6666 x3034/23)

Region II – Monroe, Wayne, Livingston, Ontario, Yates, Seneca, Steuben, Schuyler, and Chemung

Kristin Perrone, Child Care Council, Inc (585-654-4720); Gini Albertalli, Child & Family Resources, Inc. (315-536-1134)

Region III – Cayuga, Jefferson, Onondaga, Oswego, Herkimer, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, St. Lawrence, Broome, Chenango, Cortland, Tompkins, and Tioga

Desalyn DeSouza, Child Care Council of Onondaga County (315-446-1220 x335); Arlene Brouillette, Mid-York Child Care Coordinating Council (315-339-8450); Jessica Hyatt, Family Enrichment Network (607-723-8313 x826);

Region IV – Albany, Columbia, Delaware, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Otsego, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, Washington, Clinton, Essex and Franklin

Betsy Feuerstein/Jean Ahearn, Capital District Child Care Coordinating Council (518-426-7181); Ann Fraser, Child Care Coordinating Council of the North Country (518-561-4999)

Region V - New York City

Julia Travers, Child Care, Inc. (212-929-7604 x3011); Julie Ying Zhu, Asian Child Care Referral Program of the Chinese-American Planning Council (212-941-0030 x261); Iris Beth Rodriguez, Committee for Hispanic Children & Families (212-206-1090); Yvelisse Jimenez, Child Development Support Corporation (718-398-6370); May-Roline Charles, Day Care Council of New York (212-206-7818); Julia Travers, Child Care, Inc. (212-929-7604 x3011)

Region VI – Westchester, Rockland, Dutchess, Putnam, Ulster, Orange and Sullivan

Betsy Mercein, Child Care Council of Westchester (914-761-3456 x160); Marcia Scheer, Child Care Resources of Rockland, Inc. (845-425-0009 x458); Donna Thomas, Child Care Council of Dutchess (845-473-4141 x17); Cindy Esposito, New Windsor, NY (845-425-0009 x419); Nancy MacDonald, Best Friends Services Inc. (845-794-6037)

Region VII - Nassau and Suffolk

Anita Massey, Child Care Council of Suffolk (631-462-0303); Christine Perinchief, Child Care Council of Nassau (516-358-9250 x32)

The role for the Regional Infant & Toddler TA centers is to provide information on best practices in infant and toddler care to existing and potential child care providers; to promote and expand opportunities for specialized training and credentialing in infancy; to serve as a resource to the CCRRs and the OCFS regional office staff; and to conduct other activities to highlight the importance of the first three years and improve the quality of infant and toddler care in all settings.

The IT Coordinator at the NYS Child Care Coordinating Council (NYSCCCC) supports and connects the regional centers via networking meetings, training opportunities and electronic communication strategies. She also works at the state level to impact the quality of care through systems change and state-level collaborations. The NYSCCCC serves as a clearinghouse to channel information from the national level to the regions. Connections are maintained with organizations such as Zero to Three, Early Head Start National Resource Center, National Center for Social Emotional Foundations, and the Better Baby Care Campaign.

The first full year of operation, 2003, made a tremendous impact across the state and in local communities. The IT Specialists have been developing resources and training curricula, expanding their own knowledge, recruiting other Infant Toddler folks, developing relationships and creating a map of regional assets. First year activities included:

- Over 57,000 outreach activities were conducted across the state to make people aware of the TA centers and the services available to parent and providers
- Over 4,000 potential providers received enhanced technical assistance about the special needs of infants and toddlers in child care
- Over 3,500 existing providers received enhanced technical assistance on best practices with infants and toddlers
- Over 4,000 existing providers received specialized training in the care and education of infants and toddlers.

A retreat was held in January 2004 to reflect upon the first year and make necessary improvements. NYSCCCC has engaged Bank Street College of Education to design and assist with an evaluation component that will measure the impact of the network and provide feedback for continuous improvement.

Also in 2004, two statewide events will provide a forum for the continued networking and skill building of Infant Toddler professionals:

- Infant Toddler tracks for Leadership, Directors and Teachers at the NYS AEYC Conference in New York City April 22-24, 2004
- 1st Annual NYS Conference on Infancy – a cross disciplinary conference (co-sponsored by NYSCCCC, Cornell Early Childhood Program, and Building Brighter Futures for Broome) to be held in Binghamton on October 14-16, 2004

For more information contact Evelyn Efinger, Infant/Toddler Coordinator NYS Child Care Coordinating Council, 518-690-4217; eefinger@nyscccc.org or call the regional center nearest you.

Early Care and Education News and Resources

- www.earlychildhood.org This new website, developed by the New York State Council on Children and Families, aims to support professional development and improve the quality of early childhood and school-age programs. It provides information for people interested in a career in early childhood and school-age programs as well as those already working in the field and looking to advance in their careers. It also contains information that supports the efforts of program directors and others to improve the quality of their programs.
- www.ces.purdue.edu/providerparent The Provider-Parent Partnerships website, created with the support of a 21st Century Initiative grant from the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service at Purdue University, provides resources to assist child care providers in joining with parents to support children's well being. The project is associated with the Purdue Extension Plan of Work and directed by Judith A. Myers-Walls, an associate professor and Extension specialist in the Department of Child Development and Family Studies (CDFS) at Purdue University.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Program Work Team in
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Barbara J. Bristow, Dept. of Policy Analysis and Management; **Moncrieff Cochran**, Co-Chair PWT, Cornell Early Childhood Program, Dept. of Human Development; **Rachel Dunifon**, Dept. of Policy Analysis and Management; **Kim Dunlavey**, Cornell Early Childhood Program, Dept. of Human Development; **Tim Dunlavey**, Cornell Early Childhood Program, Dept. of Human Development; **Robert Frawley**, NYS Council on Children and Families; **Cindy Gallagher**, NYS Department of Education; **Susan Gibbons**, New York State Head Start Association; **Lisa Graf**, Cornell Cooperative Extension Chautauqua County; **Kristi Lekies**, Cornell Early Childhood Program, Dept. of Human Development; **Susan Matson**, Co-Chair PWT, Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County; **Lorraine Maxwell**, Dept. of Design and Environmental Analysis; **Lisa McCabe**, Co-Chair PWT, Cornell Early Childhood Program, Dept. of Human Development; **Nancy Olsen-Harbach**, Cornell Cooperative Extension Suffolk County; **Judy Ross Bernstein**, Dept. of Human Development; **Carol Saginaw**, New York State Child Care Coordinating Council; **Elizabeth Stilwell**, Early Childhood Center at Cornell; **Sonia Toledo**, New York State School Age Care Coalition; **Nancy Torp**, Cornell Cooperative Extension Steuben County

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