



# Research UpDATE

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College of Education and Human Services • Office of Research Services



## From the Associate Dean

Dear Readers:

This issue highlights work of researchers from the Center for Persons with Disabilities (CPD). The CPD is celebrating 35 years of providing Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Services. A major focus of this work is to serve the needs of Utah and its rural, culturally diverse, and underserved populations.

To learn more about projects undertaken by researchers from the Early Intervention Research Institute (EIRI), a division of CPD, please join me at the Alumni House for EIRI Day on June 14. A schedule will be forthcoming.

Jim Dorward

## News Note

The Early Intervention Research Institute (EIRI) established in 1972, serves as the Research and Evaluation Division of the CPD. Emphasis is placed on children and families with special health needs and other forms of risk in a community context. EIRI projects have totaled approximately \$1 million per year for 10 years.

### Measuring the High Notes of Parenting—the PICCOLO Measure

What parents do with their children can help or hinder the children's development. Parents who teach col-



ors, shapes, and how to count to 10 can help prepare their children for kindergarten, but the most important parenting behaviors may have happened years earlier. Parenting behaviors with infants and toddlers can affect children's sense of security, motivation to learn, and ability to communicate.

In fact, early parenting is thought to be so important that many early intervention programs, such as Early Head Start, work directly with parents to help them support their children's early development. But when programs want to assess parenting behaviors or track their program's impact, they find existing parenting measures hard to use or not available at all.

With funding from the Administration for Children and Families, Lori Roggman and Mark Innocenti and a marvelous staff have developed a parenting behavior measure that is psychometrically strong but also useful, practical, and appropriate for Head Start programs.

The result of their concerted efforts is called PICCOLO (Parenting Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes.) PICCOLO is a checklist of 33 parenting behaviors in four do-

mains—affection, responsiveness, encouragement, and teaching. PICCOLO scores at ages one to three predict children's vocabulary, problem solving scores, and at age five predict self-regulation skills. Practitioners provided great feedback about PICCOLO, such as: "I saw things I didn't see before—how little the mom actually speaks to her child;" "PICCOLO helps highlight weak and strong skills;" "You see things you might want to work with the parent on the next visit. . . things you don't always see." For more information go to: <http://eiri.usu.edu/>

### Birth Certificate Orders: An Opportunity for Hearing Screening Follow-up

The Birth Certificate Project is a cooperative project between the Utah Department of Health and the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University. Directed by Judith Holt (USU/CPD) and Rich Harward (Utah Department of Health). The goal of the project is to improve the follow-up screening rate for Utah infants who fail their new-



born hearing screening at their birthing facility/hospital and do not return for follow-up. Six percent of Utah newborns fail (or miss) the initial screening. Approximately 25-30% of that 6% do not return to complete the screening. This is problematic due to the potential consequences associated with congenital or late onset hearing loss. If children with hearing loss are not identified early it is difficult for them to develop the language, social, and cognitive skills necessary for later success in life. Early identification is crucial to insure that children receive appropriate early intervention services.

To date, this project has developed an electronic data sharing connection through the Child Health Advanced Records Management (CHARM) data integration system that links the existing state databases of Vital Records (Birth and Death Certificates) and Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) to identify children who have not completed hearing screening or the recommended audiological follow-up.

All parents/legal guardians who apply for a birth certificate whose child is in need of hearing screening follow up will receive (1) the initial alert letter from Vital Records, (2) a follow-up letter, or (3) a phone call from the Utah EHDI Program. The project evaluation will determine which method produces the best overall rate of return and whether this type of system is effective for reducing the number of children who could become lost to follow-up or to the system.

For more information go to: [www.cpd.usu.edu](http://www.cpd.usu.edu)



### Better Literacy Outcomes for Children At Risk

Research shows that when a parent and young child look at a book together, certain parent behaviors lead to better language and literacy outcomes for the child. Some children are at risk for language delays which leads to later problems with reading and comprehension. One way to improve language skills and pre-literacy skills is to not only read to your child, but to ask certain types of questions (reading alone is good but not enough to overcome risk factors).

For families with risk factors or with limited reading skills, interventions need to focus on activities that provide the same benefits of reading in ways that are of high interest and reflect family cultural practices.

With funding from the Administration for Children and Families, researchers Lisa Boyce, Mark Innocenti, Vonda Jump, Cora Price, and Lori Roggman at the Early Intervention Research Institute (EIRI) have partnered with El Centro de la familia's Migrant (CDLF) Head Start Center to develop and evaluate the SHELLS (Storytelling for Home Enrichment of Language and Literacy Skills) curriculum that will use family storytelling and book making activities to

promote child language and literacy skills.

The curriculum is designed to guide early intervention providers in the process of developing family books and to keep the early intervention providers focused on the skills that both the parents and children need to be more effective.

As part of the activities, the early intervention provider helps families make books by encouraging parent-child conversations, taking pictures during activities or of relevant objects, and helping to make the book by offering to write down the conversations on the pages if needed. These books help children experience the value of print as a link between experience and language. When parents and children are engaged together in producing a book, the result is a powerful resource for parent-child conversation and shared literacy experiences, even when parents cannot read and there are few literacy materials in the home.

Many families are particularly interested in activities that not only promote their children's school readiness by enriching their language and literacy experiences but also promote family values. The SHELLS curriculum strategies begin with using simple questions to encourage conversations between parents and their children. Even these simple conversations have provided multiple opportunities for families to share their experiences and values by emphasizing family cooperation, celebration, and affection

The SHELLS project is not far enough along to provide data on its effectiveness; project directors expect to finish data collection in early 2008.

[www.cehs.usu.edu/ors/home.htm](http://www.cehs.usu.edu/ors/home.htm)

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