2012 Research Presentation Summaries

Presentation	Links to Practice, Policy and Training
Educare of Omaha Coaching and Mentoring: Impacts on Classroom Quality **Lisa St. Clair & Gladys Haynes**	• Relationships are key. These include relationships between coach and the teaching team, and among the teaching team (i.e., teachers with paraprofessionals). • Self-selection into coaching is associated with strong levels of participation and motivation for improvement. • Programs are encouraged to utilize a joint strategy planning approach toward continuous improvement, rather than "telling" teachers what to do.
Early Childhood Coaching in Nebraska: What Behaviors Characterize the Interactions Between Coach/Coachee Dyads? **Lisa Knoche**	• The behaviors that early childhood coaches exhibit are important and relate to the likelihood of the coachees (i.e. teachers, providers, parents) actively participating in the coaching conversation. • Coach behaviors directed towards (a) relationship-building, (b) observational, (c) feedback and (d) joint planning relate to an increase in the coachee's level of engagement in the coaching session. • Feedback for early childhood coach professionals is needed to support their practice; coaches expressed a desire for this support when interviewed. A mechanism for providing professional development to EC coaches about their use of coaching strategies is warranted.
Early Language and Literacy Development for Children in Preschool Settings: What is the Role of Family? **Sandra Plata-Potter**	• Early literacy skills in preschool children are more influenced by programming that includes families and other caregivers (e.g., child care) than by center-based preschool programming alone. Programs should consider strategic efforts to link home and school settings. • In-depth interviews with Latino parents revealed that they (a) recognize their role as their children's teacher; (b) are cognizant of their children's progress; and (c) understand the importance of optimal learning environments. They value the education of their children, and expressed a desire to be involved in preschool. • Programs should investigate and consider the perspective of parents, and recognize how this perspective contributes to the interaction that parents have with both their children and with preschool programs.
Promoting Early Language/Literacy: Development of a Tiered Family Engagement Approach **Brandy Clarke**	• A multi-tiered family engagement approach can feasibly be implemented in preschool settings to address children's language and literacy needs. • The development of the multi-tiered language and literacy model was based on a strong foundation of high-quality *universal* language and literacy instruction, classroom management, and family engagement approaches. • Teacher-implemented family engagement strategies were more feasible and effective when they were

	applied using a planful, intentional, and individualized approach.
Nebraska Early Childhood Education Program: What is its Impact on Children and Families? Barbara Jackson	• Program evaluation of early childhood programs is an important aspect of the service delivery model as it provides timely information that can be used for programmatic decision making, as part of a continuous improvement process. • It is important to develop integrated longitudinal data systems in order to expand the data available to address relevant practice and policy issues.
Thresholds of Child Care Quality and Children's Development: Linear and Non-Linear Models Julia Torquati	• Many associations between quality measures and children's developmental outcomes are non-linear. • The General Additive Model (GAM) analysis is a useful tool for identifying associations that are best represented by non-linear models. • It is important to keep in mind that the identified thresholds for quality represent the beginning of a sensitive range, so it's important to improve quality within the sensitive range.
The Influence of Natural Environments on Children's Cognitive Functioning Anne Schutte	• Children benefit from spending time in natural environments. • Time in natural environments improves performance on children's cognitive measures of attention and response inhibition. • Time in natural environments appears to be especially beneficial to children with ADHD.
Sleep Habits and Cognitive Development Victoria and Dennis Molfese	• Good sleep habits, such as regular bedtimes and sufficient sleep time in bed at night, are related to children's learning and behavior. • The brains of people (adults and children) who get insufficient sleep take longer to process information and are slower to get started in processing information. Both of these delays affect problem solving abilities. • Sleep problems related to sleep-disordered breathing in children and adults should be taken seriously.
The Economic Analysis of Early Childhood Programs in Nebraska Eric Thompson	• Early childhood education (ECE) and programming can be considered from an economic as well as an educational perspective. ECE helps economic growth by supporting positive development in children and families. There are measurable financial benefits to society from investing in ECE. • There are multiple indicators that can be used to measure the economic benefit of ECE, including early child indicators (i.e., cognitive and socioemotional gains, crime reduction, health), later child indicators (i.e., educational attainment, SES, crime, health), and parent indicators (i.e., job training, earnings, health).

Getting Ready at Home: The Effects of Promoting Parent Engagement in Early Childhood Programs **Susan Sheridan & Chris Marvin**	• For children who are disadvantaged and at risk, early intervention efforts that establish healthy parent-child and parent-teacher/caregiver relationships can set the stage for positive developmental trajectories that extend into the early school years and beyond. • Getting Ready is a relational intervention focused on strengthening relationships between parents and their children (birth to age 5) and parents and early childhood professionals (as partners in education). This relationship/partnership-based intervention appears to provide "value added" above and beyond what is typically provided in publically-supported early intervention programs for young children. • Based on the observed effects of the Getting Ready intervention on parents and their children, programs designed to foster young children's readiness for school would be well-advised to address parents' abilities to support their young children's everyday learning experiences, and guide parents in how to partner with home visitors and classroom teachers early in their child's development.
Early Steps to School Success: Save the Children's Language-Focused Program for Parents and Children in Predominantly Rural Communities **Helen Raikes, Lisa Richardson, Elsita Escalante and Sandra Plata-Potter**	• Early Steps to School Success is a new, literacy-focused intervention for low-income children birth to kindergarten age in rural communities, sponsored by *Save the Children*. This unique intervention emphasizes a 0-3 home visiting component, and a 3-5 "book bag" follow up component. This study is now being implemented in multiple Nebraska communities (i.e., Omaha, Lexington, Santee, Schuyler) as well as in rural communities in many other states in the US. • The National Evaluation being conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, University of Maryland and George Mason University will begin in 2012. It features a quasi-experimental design comparing 3- year-olds receiving 0-3 home visiting with 3-year-olds who have not had the 0-3 program, as well as a regression discontinuity school entrance design to determine if community-wide receptive language school readiness trajectories improve over a 6-year period.
Improving Math Education in Nebraska Primary Classrooms through Teacher Professional Development: The NebraskaMATH Project **Carolyn Edwards and Wendy Smith**	• Improving mathematics education for young children in grades K-3 is complex. It begins with teachers increasing their command of subject matter and their skill to teach children deeply, not just procedural rules. • To make changes in schools, K-3 teachers must build their leadership skills so they can collaborate with their colleagues in a professional community seeking to improve mathematics teaching and learning. • To affect children's long term mathematics learning, teachers must improve their skills for partnering with families and for instilling in young children confidence in themselves as "mathematical thinkers."
Improving Reading and Listening Comprehension in PreK through Grade 3 Settings: Conceptual Bases of Language-Based Interventions **Tiffany Hogan**	• Summary unavailable due to preliminary nature of findings. For additional information, please contact Dr. Hogan.

Preschoolers' Attitudes and Behavior Toward Peers with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings **Soo-Young Hong**	• As children understand more about people with disabilities as well as different types and characteristics of disabilities, they will be more likely to form positive attitudes toward peers with disabilities. Given data that show the relatively low levels of children's understanding of and attitudes toward people with disabilities, and previous research that indicates attitudes of young children can be improved through more social contact and the provision of information about disabilities, this information should be a target area for early childhood intervention and professional development. • Children's willingness to include a peer with a disability in their play does not automatically translate into their actual inclusion behavior. If adults (e.g., parents, teachers) (a) actively participate in children's thinking and reasoning process in forming positive attitudes and making inclusion or exclusion decisions, (b) provide useful information about people with disabilities (e.g., capability of children with disabilities), and (c) encourage them to play with peers with disabilities, children's affective and cognitive attitudes will work together to produce positive behavioral attitudes which may contribute to social decisions later in life. • By initiating explicit discussions about people with different ability levels, parents may be able to enhance young children's acceptance of peers with disabilities, and promote their social skills. Given children's emerging understanding of people with disabilities and the malleability of their attitudes in early years, we suggest these topics be addressed at home and in the classroom.
Children's Temperament in the Classroom **Kathleen Moritz Rudasill**	• Children's temperamental characteristics have implications for their adjustment to the classroom environment. • Warm, supportive, and responsive teaching practices may be particularly important for the success of children with more "spirited" temperamental characteristics. • Teacher and parent awareness of the role of children's temperament on their school experiences is critical for maximizing fit between children and the classroom environment.

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