Head Start Graduate Student Research Program: 2013 Research Scholars

Tracy Carter

Project Title:
Profiles of Classroom Engagement in Head Start Children: Implications for Academic Readiness

Mentor:
Rebecca Bulotsky-Shearer

Project Funding Years:
2013-2015

University Affiliation:
University of Miami

Project Abstract:
Research is needed to examine profiles of children's classroom engagement so teachers have tools to identify the children in greatest need of intervention before they transition to kindergarten. This study will use contextualized observations of 528 children's engagement with teachers, peers and tasks to identify their membership in engagement profiles. Specifically, this study will use a latent profile approach to analyze data collected through a larger University Head Start partnership research project in Miami-Dade County. This will be the first study to use a latent profile analysis to identify profiles of children's classroom engagement within a culturally and linguistically diverse sample of Head Start children. This study will also be the first to examine whether children's patterns of classroom engagement change across a year in Head Start and whether child and classroom-level factors are associated with that change. This is important, as it will inform our understanding of natural points of intervention for children within early childhood programs. Lastly, this study will extend prior research by examining the differential association between engagement profiles and gains in academic skills. Understanding how distinct profiles of engagement are associated with academic readiness is critical information needed to inform curricular and intervention efforts that can maximize engagement in learning for children in greatest need of intervention prior to kindergarten entry.

Sample:

204 Miami-Dade Head Start Children across 34 participating classrooms, 2011-2012
324 Miami-Dade Head Start Children across 38 participating classrooms, 2012-2013

Measures:
Observed classroom engagement
• The Individualized Classroom Assessment Scoring System (inCLASS)
Observed classroom process quality
• The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
English language screener
• Preschool Language Assessment Scale (PreLAS)
Academic readiness.
• The Learning Express (LE)

Colleen Morrison

Project Title:
Risk and Protective Factors during the Perinatal Period

Mentor:
Brenda Jones Harden

Project Funding Years:
2013-2015

University Affiliation:
University of Maryland

Project Abstract:
The goal of the proposed study is to enhance knowledge of perinatal depression (i.e., depression that occurs during pregnancy or within the first 12 months following delivery) and its impact on maternal functioning in low-income, African American women, as well as the health and developmental outcomes of their young infants. The research objectives of the study are: (1) To enhance our knowledge of perinatal depression in low-income, African American women; (2) To consider how specific environmental factors, beyond poverty, such as trauma exposure and environmental chaos, impact perinatal depression in low-income, African American women; (3) To enhance our knowledge of maternal fetal attachment in low-income, African American pregnant women; (4) To consider how specific risk and protective factors, such as maternal depression, maternal health practices during pregnancy, and maternal fetal attachment impact neonatal health and