

Head Start Graduate Student Research Program: 2011 Research Scholars

Elizabeth Bell

Project Title:

Peer Play as a Context for Identifying Profiles of Children for Improving Academic Readiness in Head Start

Mentor:

Daryl Greenfield

Project Funding Years:

2011-2013

University Affiliation:

University of Miami

Project Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of peer play behaviors on rates of growth in academic readiness in a sample of multiethnic, low-income children enrolled in Miami-Dade County Head Start. The specific intent is to: (1) identify profiles of Head Start children based on their peer play behaviors; and (2) examine whether these profiles of children are differentiated by growth in multiple school-readiness domains. The study will employ a child-centered approach by utilizing peer play as a context to identify subgroups of children who display specific patterns of behavior, and will examine how the academic trajectories of math, literacy, and science of these children differ during one year of enrollment in Head Start. It is expected that results of the study will contribute to the understanding of the influence of peer play on academic readiness. Results could also contribute to the development of specific interventions or curriculum strategies within Head Start classrooms to support socially-mediated learning experiences.

Sample:

900 Children from 90 classrooms in 20 Head Start Centers in Miami-Dade County, Florida

Measures:

Child Outcome Measures

- Penn Interactive Per Play Scale (PIPPS)
- Learning Express (LE)

- Preschool Science Assessment (PSA)

Dipti Dev

Project Title:

The Role of Head Start and Child Care Classrooms in Early Childhood Obesity: A Cumulative Risk Model

Mentor:

Brent McBride

Project Funding Years:

2011-2013

University Affiliation:

University of Illinois

Project Abstract:

The proposed study will build on and extend work generated by the Synergistic Theory and Research Obesity and Nutrition Group (STRONG) Kids (SK) research initiative. The SK initiative is a multi-disciplinary project to study longitudinal determinants of obesity during early childhood. The proposed study will be an independent subproject within the SK initiative, gathering additional data from teachers, staff, and project administrators from Head Start and child care programs participating in the larger SK project. This study has three specific aims: (1) compute a cumulative risk index for childhood obesity using the Six-Cs model of environmental influences; (2) identify factors that influence Head Start and child care providers feeding practices and verbal communications during mealtimes; and (3) investigate Head Start and child care directors' perceptions of current nutrition standards for early care and education programs. An expected outcome of the study is effective prediction of children who are at greatest risk of childhood obesity. Information gained from this study will provide policymakers and early childhood professionals with new insights that can guide the development of interventions designed to more effectively address early childhood obesity.

Sample:

- Objective 1: 500 Children and Families from 36 Head Start and Child Care Centers
- Objective 2: 90 Head Start and Child Care Teachers
- Objective 3: 12 Focus Groups of Directors and Administrators