
Making A Difference: The First 10 Years
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Introduction

What impact has Duke’s Center for Child and Family Policy had in its first ten years? Joel Rosch, senior research scholar at the Center, describes it this way, “If you climbed into a time machine and went back to 1998 and talked to North Carolina public officials in agencies that serve kids and you asked them about their contact with Duke, they would have said, ‘Duke who? The basketball team?’ But today none of the public agencies that serve children do much without talking to us. We’re able to enter into partnerships with agencies and share our research results in ways that make the information meaningful and useful to policymakers and practitioners.”

The impetus for starting the Center for Child and Family Policy, says William Chafe, was the desire “to strengthen the programmatic initiatives of the department of public policy and to develop a center that would have both singular relevance and enormous potential for growth.” In 1998, Chafe, who was then the dean of the faculty of Trinity College of Arts and Sciences, recruited Ken Dodge from Vanderbilt University to be the director. “Ken did a brilliant job of attracting external support to make it grow and grow and grow,” Chafe says.

“The Center was created with a four-part mission of promoting research, teaching, policy engagement, and service,” says Director Ken Dodge, “with the overarching goal of bringing the knowledge and research of Duke faculty and Center researchers to bear on issues of importance in public policy relative to children and their families.”

Today, the Center does just that, with more than $7 million in yearly grant funding and 70 employees, including researchers, database analysts, interviewers, and project coordinators, plus nearly 40 affiliated faculty fellows. Faculty and staff work together to discover and evaluate strategies to improve outcomes for children and families and to share their discoveries with policymakers and public agencies.

Members of the Center are often called upon to testify and give advice on policy matters at statewide and nationwide levels. The Center also gives high priority to teaching. Undergraduate and graduate students take classes and pursue research at the Center through fellowships, independent studies, and internships. In addition, through the Center, undergraduates can earn an interdisciplinary certificate in Children in Contemporary Society and doctoral students can earn a certificate in Education Policy Research.

At the ten-year mark, Chafe says of the Center, “It’s been one of the great successes of my deanship. I think it’s been a model of how to use an academic institution as a means of having an impact on pivotal issues.”

Researchers and staff are integral to the success of the Center.
The Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University:  
A Blueprint for Success  
for a University-Based Interdisciplinary Center

by Kenneth A. Dodge, Director, Center for Child and Family Policy

By many measures, the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University has been a success. We have grown from zero external funding to a stable level of between $7 and $8 million each year. We contribute important research findings to the academy. We mentor dozens of undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral, and mid-career scientists. We contribute directly to effective human services for many children and families in Durham, North Carolina, and surrounding communities. We engage policymakers and the policy process at the local, state, and federal levels. As Joel Rosch, one of the Center’s senior research scholars, likes to say, “Name an important policy issue in North Carolina affecting children, and the Center is there playing a major role.”

I have been asked how we did it; that is, what is the blueprint or recipe for our success? This is a story of, “If you build it, they will come.” Eleven years ago, Duke had no university-wide interdisciplinary research centers. Nationally, very few centers were devoted to the field of child and family policy. Now, there is a consortium of approximately 30 different universities that have these kinds of centers, with the Consortium’s headquarters and executive director (Jenni Owen) located here at Duke. As I reflect on our growth, I realize several ingredients have been crucial to “cooking up” our success.

I. Institutional Commitment

The concept of the Center began in the 1990s when a small group of Duke faculty members began meeting to discuss how they could synergize their mutual interests in research in child development to have a broader impact on society. These faculty members came from diverse departments and disciplines, including John Coie (psychology), Phil Costanzo (psychology), Phil Cook (public policy and economics), Jane Costello (psychiatry), and Alan Kerckhoff (sociology), among others. They approached William Chafe, dean of the faculty of Trinity College of Arts and Sciences, who had the financial resources to invest and the vision to understand the potential contribution that a center could make. Perhaps because no one on board at Duke during that era had the time to devote to such an undertaking, an external search was conducted, and I was hired to found and lead the new center. I recall sitting at dinner at Bill Chafe’s home when he gave me his broad, bold, and vague charge: Make a difference!

II. Problem-Based Research Focus

Rather than being discipline-based, as was most research at that time (and still is), we committed ourselves to problem-based research; that is, research that is directed toward solving real-life problems facing children and families in contemporary society. Grandiosely, we likened the challenge to building the atomic bomb or putting a man on the moon, rather than testing an ivory-tower theory.

We wanted to identify important problems for which Duke might be uniquely positioned to provide solutions. Early on, we saw one such problem in minority achievement gaps in children’s educational success. Although Head Start and other federal policies had been
in place for 40 years, the gap had not closed. In 1999, we were about to enter an era of accountability in education, with the “ABCs” in North Carolina and the creation of the No Child Left Behind Act in Congress. The faculty members at Duke were not organized into a school of education, and we realized that this was a strength because we were not bound by old ways of thinking about the problem.

We identified two other issues as well. We completed a commissioned report for the community of Durham in which we noted that the child abuse rate for Durham (especially in early life) was higher than the state average, which was higher than the national average. Duke was home to the Center for Child and Family Health, which was devoted to the problem of child abuse, so we knew we had a terrific partner with whom to tackle the problem. Thus, the prevention of child maltreatment in the first five years of life became a priority. Likewise, adolescent problem behaviors (violence, drug use, pregnancy, dropout) were growing, without clear policy or practice solutions. Duke faculty members were emerging as national leaders in the study of peer influences on self-regulatory processes, so we marshaled those resources to address adolescent substance use.

III. Assemble Existing Faculty and Community Strengths

The next step in the strategic process was to capture the interest of already-busy, outstanding Duke faculty members. For the topic of education policy, we formed a working group that agreed to meet on occasion, including Helen (Sunny) Ladd, Phil Cook, and Char-lie Clotfelter in public policy, John Coie and Nancy Hill in psychol-ogy, Tom Nechyba in economics, and several faculty members from the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. We knew that we needed to ground ourselves in the daily tasks of educating children and the realities of policymaking, so we approached administrators in the Durham Public Schools (David Holdzkom), the State of North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (Brad McMillan, Carolyn Cobb, and Marvin Pittman), and the Education Cabinet of Governor Jim Hunt of North Carolina (Charles Thompson) to join the group.

Sulzberger-Levitan Social Policy Graduate Research Fellowships

Generous support from members of the Sulzberger family and from 1979 Duke graduate Dan Levitan funds the Sulzberger-Levitan Social Policy Graduate Research Fellowships. These fellowships are intended to encourage Duke graduate students from a variety of social sciences to apply the methods and perspectives of their fields to public policy that relates to families and children.

Phil Costanzo, associate director of the Center and professor of psychol-ogy and neuroscience, organizes biweekly seminars for the fellows, in which researchers from various disciplines address emerging issues in social science approaches to policy translation. Fellows also write a short policy brief with assistance from Jenni Owen, director of policy initiatives and Joel Rosch, senior research scholar and policy liaison.

Lane Destro, one of the 2009-10 Sulzberger-Levitan fellows, says, “The main focus of the seminars is to teach us how to integrate public policy concerns with our own research, and to set the tone for what will be our future research.” Each fellow is paired with a Center faculty fellow or researcher to complete a research project and write a public policy brief. Destro, who is a PhD candidate in sociology, is working with Anna Gassman-Pines, assistant professor of public policy, on a project examining the outcomes of very young children in North Carolina in relation to large- and small-scale employment shifts in the state.

“For me, the great part of being a fellow is getting to understand how policy-relevant thought and attention and care is incorporated into every aspect of a research project, instead of being an afterthought,” Destro says. “I’m interacting with experts who have been involved in various policy arenas and they impart experience we wouldn’t otherwise have access to. This is a really valuable fellowship for all of us.”
IV. Provide Unique Research Resources

Over time, the group assembled what was known in the research literature, and we asked what the likely next research questions were. Dissatisfied with the pedestrian answers that we generated, we reframed the question: What resources do we need to answer the questions that really need to be asked?

In education policy, the obvious missing resource was population-wide data on individual children’s educational achievement. Virtually all of the studies had used small data sets because university researchers could not collect achievement data on large numbers of students, especially across their educational histories. Our local school administrators pointed out that such data did exist because school districts were required to send them to warehouses at the state’s Department of Public Instruction. Over 1.3 million children attend 2,100 public schools with 100,000 teachers in North Carolina. Important data on these students had been collected since the 1990s when Governor Jim Hunt pioneered school-level accountability practices based on student achievement.

We went to work. We began regular treks to the State Capitol where we met with various officials to learn what data existed and what hurdles needed to be cleared in order to obtain access to these data sets. We convinced state officials that we could and would save them time and money by assembling data files, cleaning them, and making them ready for researchers to use. We offered to conduct research studies that were commissioned by state officials and to answer any questions that they had. In early 2001, we signed a Memorandum of Agreement between the State of North Carolina and Duke University, creating the North Carolina Education Research Data Center (Data Center). We were off and running.

The possibilities seemed endless, but we needed staff members to help conduct the research. We hired three bright and eager postdoctoral research scientists—Arnaldo Zelli, a social psychologist; Domini Castellino, a developmental psychologist; and Bob Bifulco, an economist. The strategy that we followed was to encourage these researchers to interact with faculty members and to collaborate on writing research grant applications so that they could get themselves independently funded. We then used the vacated funds to hire new research scientists who could repeat the process. Today, the Center is home to 15 to 20 externally-funded, full-time research scientists who work on various research problems.

V. Facilitate External Funding

As we grew, we needed more financial resources than the university could provide to support a data center to house the rich data files. We were fortunate that the Spencer Foundation was interested in nurturing research on education as part of its “Southern Initiative.” Through Sunny Ladd’s leadership, the Center received multi-year funding to support the Data Center and to hire its first director, Elizabeth Glennie, a sociologist whose work focuses on the U.S. educational system. This investment in infrastructure enabled researchers to conduct studies that they could not conduct on their own. The North Carolina Education Research Data Center thrives today under the capable leadership of Clara Muschkin.

I had been troubled by the disparity between the high quality of Duke faculty members and the relative lack of external research funding by this group, but the reasons became obvious when I realized that faculty members received relatively little support for submitting grant applications. They had to generate their own budgets, produce their own forms, and even walk across campus to obtain numerous institutional signatures before submission was allowed. We were able to make it easier for faculty members to submit grant applications by creating a small team of grants managers headed by Barbara Pollock. She may be the most important ingredient to our success, for she assembled a management team that quickly became reputed as among the best on campus. This team enabled Duke researchers to compete successfully for federal and foundation research grants because the faculty members attended to the science, the management team assembled the application, and the Data Center made the marginal cost of conducting cutting-edge research very small compared with the cost of starting from the ground level.

Our list of participating faculty members grew, both within Duke University and at collaborating universities across the state. As a result, our research grant portfolio began to grow, and we were able to offset the costs of the Data Center, at least partially, by charging research projects modest fees for the professional time it took to assemble tailored data sets for research studies.

Grant Expenditures by Fiscal Year

Includes Direct and Indirect Costs

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Weaving Together Teaching, Research, Policy Engagement, and Service
VI. Integrate Research and Teaching

The mission of the Center for Child and Family Policy spans beyond research, so our next step was to integrate students and scholars-in-training into these research activities. The postdoctoral research scientists have already been mentioned. We hired graduate students as part-time staff members of the Data Center and for our research grants. With Phil Costanzo’s leadership, we initiated a formal certificate program in Education Policy Research at the doctoral level. The goal of this program was to nurture the education policy research interests of PhD students in economics, sociology, psychology, political science, and public policy. This program included students from Duke as well as UNC-Chapel Hill, making it one of the few ongoing multi-university pedagogical endeavors in the area. Like many graduate student programs, this resulted in creating a home for intellectual community.

Training for Doctoral Students in the Social Sciences

Over a seven-year period, 65 PhD students in the social sciences at both Duke and UNC-Chapel Hill participated in a year-long fellowship at the Center, funded by the Spencer Foundation. Phil Costanzo, professor of psychology and neuroscience and associate director of the Center, says the idea was to encourage doctoral candidates to apply the skills and insights from their particular discipline to issues in education. Participants were working on doctoral degrees in fields such as psychology, social work, sociology, economics, anthropology, history, and political science.

Beginning in 2001, Spencer Fellows met weekly with local and national experts. “We brought in top-rate scholars from all around the country to meet them,” Costanzo says. “They learned about different ways of thinking about schooling—from the economics of schooling to the sociology of schooling—and how they each might affect practice.” Speakers included a diverse array of nationally prominent scholars, local superintendents of schools, and former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt.

In the summer, each Spencer Fellow collaborated with a researcher in a different discipline and wrote a policy brief based on the research. Students received advice and support on the policy briefs from Jenni Owen, director of policy initiatives; and Geelea Seaford and Jana Alexander, former directors of communications. They were also given exposure to legislative and policy issues by Joel Rosch, senior research scholar and policy liaison.

“We felt the program was very, very successful,” Costanzo says. “For their dissertations, many of the Fellows employed models from their disciplines to better understand knotty problems in education, and some of them ended up taking positions or joint appointments in a school of education.”

Aaron Thornburg, a PhD candidate in cultural anthropology at Duke, participated in the program in 2007-2008. He says the speaker series was invaluable. “It was really useful as a way to learn about other approaches,” he says. “In cultural anthropology, the methodology is ethnography, so looking at quantitative and statistical approaches was a great opportunity. I have a better understanding of the methodological standpoints of education research from a variety of fields.”

Lijon Song, a Spencer Fellow who is now an assistant professor at Vanderbilt University, agrees, saying, “They selected graduate students from different disciplines, and we shared this similar interest in education, but we were talking about that from different perspectives. This program brought us together. It’s really very helpful for us to understand what the other disciplines are doing.”

Although the funding has ended, the program lives on through the graduate certificate in Education Policy Research, which was developed several years after the Spencer Fellows program began. About 40 doctoral students have earned the certificate or are on track to do so at the completion of their PhD studies.
We needed financial resources to support the students and faculty teaching time, and again we were fortunate to be supported by the Spencer Foundation.

Our mission includes undergraduate education as well, so we have included undergraduate students in everything that we do. The first undergraduate to initiate an honors thesis in the Center was Jacqui Morris, who had interests in gifted education for economically-disadvantaged children. She was a psychology major with strong public policy interests. I was enthused about mentoring her thesis when she suddenly lost her life in an automobile accident. Her family generously created the Jacqueline Anne Morris Memorial Foundation and an endowment in her memory to support undergraduate research in child and family policy. Each year, the endowment provides several undergraduate students the resources they need to engage in original research. Several of these students typically participate in education policy research each year.

VII. Engage Policymakers

Yet another mission of the Center is to engage policymakers on topics of mutual interest. Faculty members often hope that their research has an impact on policy, but they are relatively naïve about how to assert that impact. We knew that in public policy, as in most spheres of life, human relationships make all the difference. So we lured two outstanding public policy professionals who had worked in government to become full-time staff members at the Center. Jenni Owen had been Governor Hunt’s education policy advisor, and Joel Rosch had been a planning leader at the Governor’s Crime Commission. They came on board, got to know our faculty members and their research, and went about the task of identifying points of possible contact between Duke faculty members and the policy world. They explicitly sought bi-directional paths; that is, they not only identified urgent policy issues and then found faculty members who could address those issues, but they also learned about faculty research findings and then sought current policy issues that could benefit from this knowledge. In addition, they created forums for communication, including the statewide Family Impact Seminar, which we now host annually, a series of written briefs, opportunities for testimony and briefing, membership on various commissions, and informal office meetings.

Each year, the Jacqueline Anne Morris Memorial Foundation Endowment Fund awards a research stipend to four or five undergraduate students doing social policy research at the Center.

Jacqueline Anne Morris was the Center’s first undergraduate honors thesis student. She was a rising senior at Duke, majoring in psychology and public policy, when she died in a car accident in Arizona in 2000. Her parents established the endowment to help other students at the Center pursue research related to children and families. Almost 20 students have received Morris Fellowships thus far.

The first Morris Fellow was Marcia Eisenstein Segall, who graduated from Duke with a major in public policy studies in 2006. Director Ken Dodge mentored Segall on her research project, which examined the access of minority students to gifted educational programs in North Carolina in the context of No Child Left Behind.

“My findings were that, as a general rule, minority students access gifted education at a much lower rate than non-minority students,” she says. The funds from the Morris Memorial Fund allowed Segall to travel to the National Association for Gifted Children conference in Louisville, Kentucky, and also paid for training in SPSS, a data-analyzing software.

Today Segall works at the Denver Scholarship Fund, raising money for need-based college scholarships for low-income students.

“We knew that in public policy, as in most spheres of life, human relationships make all the difference.”

Kenneth Dodge
VIII. Formula for Success

The Center’s program in education policy continues to thrive today. We have numerous active research grants in this area, a large number of faculty members and students who utilize the Data Center, the ongoing graduate certificate program, a new undergraduate certificate program, and important contributions to knowledge in education policy being made each year. We have developed a way to enable undergraduate students to act as research consultants to Durham Public Schools’ administrators. Faculty members at the Sanford School of Public Policy have formed a group called Beyond Test Scores that conducts cutting-edge research using the Data Center’s resources.

We now have a formula and have followed a similar process of growing an integrated system of research, teaching, service, and policy engagement in our other two focus areas—preventing child abuse and adolescent problem behaviors. Each area now supports an ongoing infrastructure that attracts faculty members with data, resources, and intellectual community. Each recipe has common ingredients, with unique spices added.

The principles start with a bottom-up process of matching existing faculty strengths with an important problem facing children, families, and social institutions in contemporary society. We start by forming faculty work groups around those topics. In child abuse, the identified problem was the alarmingly high rate of maltreatment in Durham, North Carolina, which we identified through a commissioned report to the Durham community entitled The State of Durham’s Children 2000. The faculty group has included, over time, Robert Murphy (psychiatry), Lisa Amaya-Jackson (psychiatry), Karen O’Donnell (pediatrics), Doriane Coleman (law), Marie Lynn Miranda (Nicholas School of the Environment), Lisa Berlin (Center for Child and Family Policy), and myself.

In adolescent problem behaviors, the identified problem was the array of destructive behaviors that characterize some adolescents, including substance abuse, violence, unwanted pregnancy, and school dropout. The faculty group has included more than 30 faculty members from diverse disciplines under the leadership of Phil Costanzo (psychology), Rick Hoyle (psychology), Jake Vigdor (public policy), and Tim Strauman (psychology). This group has attracted diverse scholars from Bill Wilson and Cindy Kuhn (pharmacology and cell biology) to Linda Burton (sociology) and Ahmad Hariri (neuroscience). Next, we identify and attract untapped resources, riches, and collaborations. For preventing child abuse, we were fortunate that a generous donor (The Mimi and Peter Haas Fund) had faith in our efforts, and The Duke Endowment made a 10-year commitment to support our maltreatment prevention initiative. For adolescent problem behaviors, we secured funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse for the Transdisciplinary Prevention Research Center.

Around these resources, we built an infrastructure of data, human capital, and administrative support. We hired postdoctoral fellows and nurtured career development awards. We leveraged internal support, through private donors and university budgets, for external grant funding. We sustain the initiatives through faculty commitments.

Today, in all three of our focus areas—education policy, child abuse prevention, and adolescent problem behaviors—the Center is indeed making a difference, just as Bill Chafe challenged us to do 10 years ago at his dinner table.
### Number of Children Receiving Human Services through Center Research Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Berlin</td>
<td>Stars Plus</td>
<td>Mimi and Peter Haas Fund NIMH, NIDA</td>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lisa Berlin</td>
<td>Promoting Supportive Parenting</td>
<td>NIMH, NIDA</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ann Brewster</td>
<td>Promoting positive youth development: Pilot of a comprehensive middle school after-school program</td>
<td>NC General Assembly and NC Dept of Public Instruction</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phil Costanzo</td>
<td>Processes of Peer Influence</td>
<td>NIDA</td>
<td>2004-2008</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ken Dodge</td>
<td>Fast Track</td>
<td>NIMH</td>
<td>1990-2010</td>
<td>494</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ken Dodge</td>
<td>Durham Family Initiative/Durham Connects</td>
<td>The Duke Endowment</td>
<td>2002-2010</td>
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<td>GREAT Schools and Families</td>
<td>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</td>
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<td>Amy Schulting</td>
<td>Kindergarten Home Visitation</td>
<td>Center for Child and Family Policy</td>
<td>2003-2008</td>
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<td>Tim Strauman</td>
<td>Project AIM: Preventing illicit substance use among middle school children</td>
<td>NIDA</td>
<td>2005-2010</td>
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<td>Yvonne Wasilewski</td>
<td>Identifying and responding to the needs of children residing in domestic violence shelters</td>
<td>The Duke Endowment and Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation</td>
<td>2006-2007</td>
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<td>Bill Wilson</td>
<td>Duke LEARN health curriculum</td>
<td>NIDA and CCFP</td>
<td>2009-2010</td>
<td>300</td>
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**Total 8,000**

### Future Challenges

We realize that as generous as the administration of Duke University has been to support the Center, and as successful as we have been in securing federal research grants, in the future we will need to rely on the generosity of private donors to nurture solutions in new topical areas. In order to invest, we need seeds. We have been fortunate to leverage past resources to secure external grants. For every dollar of private donor investment, we have raised more than eight dollars of external grants. Those external grants have been used to provide social and educational interventions to over 8,000 children and to make important scientific discoveries that benefit millions of children. We need that venture capital in the future.

This year, we are seeding efforts to address two new problems. First is the problem of income disparity. Although absolute levels of poverty exert adverse impact on children’s development, we are learning that income disparity—that is, the magnitude of difference between the haves and have-nots in a society—may exert an even more devastating impact. The second problem is school truancy, which may be an early marker of a trajectory toward school dropout.

Look for developments in these areas as we begin our second decade of making a difference in the lives of families and children in North Carolina.

"For every dollar of private donor investment, we have raised more than eight dollars of external grants. We need that venture capital in the future."

Kenneth Dodge
The North Carolina Education Research Data Center

One of the longest-running and most successful projects of the Center for Child and Family Policy is the North Carolina Education Research Data Center. Database analysts and programmers at the Data Center receive data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction on K-12 students, teachers, and schools in the North Carolina public school system and organize it for the research community by encrypting confidential information, creating longitudinal databases, and linking district, school, classroom, student, and teacher data files. If needed, data collected by other North Carolina agencies can often be linked to individuals in the educational database.

Helen “Sunny” Ladd, professor of public policy and economics, was involved in the establishment of the Data Center. She explains, “We went to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and said, ‘We have all of this interesting research that we want to do, but we can only do it if we have access to data. You have the data, but it’s not in a form that’s very accessible to researchers.’” With funding from the Spencer Foundation, the Center and DPI collaborated in 2000 to create the enormous—and enormously useful—database.

Clara Muschkin, the director of the Data Center, points out, “Acquiring data is such a challenge for researchers, as are the costs and the time required to clean, merge, and put data in formats that are possible to analyze. We allow researchers to overcome these hurdles.”

Tying Lead Levels in Early Childhood to Academic Performance in Fourth Grade

Many researchers have made productive use of the wealth of longitudinal data on individual students, which includes information such as test scores, absences, disciplinary issues, school transfers, and participation in free or reduced lunch. One study made possible by the Data Center is an analysis of the relationship of end-of-grade test scores of fourth graders to the lead levels in the blood of those same students when they were toddlers. The study was led by Marie Lynn Miranda, associate professor of environmental sciences and policy at Duke’s Nicholas School of the Environment. Miranda and her colleagues showed that children with higher levels of lead in their blood as toddlers performed worse on the fourth-grade tests. The findings hold even for low levels of lead exposure. Because low-income and minority children are exposed to more lead, the findings could help explain the achievement gaps between white and minority children and between high-income and low-income children.

When Should Middle School Begin?

Another recent study made possible by the Data Center showed that sixth graders in middle schools had more problem behaviors, including substance abuse, than sixth graders in elementary schools. Tellingly, these differences persisted beyond sixth grade; that is, ninth graders who had completed sixth grade in a middle school had significantly more problem behaviors than ninth graders who had completed sixth grade in an elementary school. The team of researchers included Muschkin, Jake Vigdor, and Phil Cook, all faculty members in the Sanford School of Public Policy. Their paper entitled, “The Negative Impacts of Starting Middle School in Sixth Grade,” won the American Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management’s 2008 Raymond Vernon Memorial Prize for best research article and was published in the Journal of Policy Analysis and Management.

Measuring the Benefit of a Teacher Bonus

A four-person team of Center researchers used the Data Center in a project funded by DPI to look at the effectiveness of a North Carolina program designed to attract and retain teachers in middle and high schools with high populations of disadvantaged students. The program offered bonuses of $1800 to math, science,
and special education teachers working in disadvantaged schools. Longitudinal teacher data showed that the program provided benefits in terms of retaining teachers. Unfortunately, the program was too short-lived for the researchers to fully evaluate whether it helped with teacher recruitment or student performance.

Making a Nationwide Impact

“All of these studies required information on individual students or teachers that could be linked over time,” Muschkin says. “The research would not have been possible without data provided by the Data Center.” Indeed, the Data Center is so valuable that education researchers from all over the country regularly use its data.

In fact, the Data Center has facilitated an explosion of research that is changing the national dialogue on issues ranging from school accountability to bonus pay for teachers to the effectiveness of charter schools, according to senior research scholar Joel Rosch. “A lot of that dialogue is informed by the research that has come out of the Data Center,” Rosch says. “People have come to expect decisions to be based on data, not anecdotes.”

The Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Reform

A track record of solid research using the Data Center put the Center for Child and Family Policy in a good position to win funding from the United States Department of Education and the Urban Institute in 2006 to establish a Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Reform (CALDER). Ladd says, “Charlie Clotfelter, Jake Vigdor, and I were at the forefront using the data to examine a wide variety of questions involving teaching and teacher quality in North Carolina.” Duke is one of six universities participating in CALDER, which originally focused on teachers but also includes other types of longitudinal education research.

CALDER has provided an umbrella of funding for many projects at the Center for Child and Family Policy. “Each one builds on earlier work, and is informed in part by what researchers are doing in states with comparable data,” Ladd says. One of the benefits of being part of the CALDER program, she points out, is the ability to work with education researchers from the other six participating universities.

Racial and Ethnic Achievement Gaps and Segregation

Some of the CALDER work has focused on achievement gaps and segregation among and within schools. The team of Clotfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor has examined achievement gaps between African American and white students and between Hispanic and white students. “Here the longitudinal
data is absolutely critical because we wanted to follow cohorts of students—intact cohorts—through time,” Ladd says. Looking at cross-sectional data can be particularly misleading for Hispanic students because, in any grade level, a certain percentage have just arrived in the United States. Intact cohorts follow the same Hispanic students from third grade to eighth grade. The researchers found that while the achievement gap between African Americans and whites remained stable from third to eighth grade, the achievement gap between Hispanics and whites narrowed in the higher grades. Ladd plans to expand the analysis into the high school grades.

In an earlier study, the same researchers examined the patterns of racial segregation not only across schools but also across classrooms within schools. They documented a recent rise in segregation in North Carolina and showed that a substantial portion of the segregation at the high school level, but not the elementary level, is within schools.

Today, Ladd says CALDER researchers have become very interested in analyzing the role school principals play in teacher quality and, by extension, school performance. “If you want effective teachers you have to have effective principals,” she says.

Because the CALDER research is rooted in solid longitudinal data and statistical research, Ladd and her colleagues make a special effort to communicate their findings to policymakers. For example, Ladd and Clotfelter made a presentation to the North Carolina State Board of Education on February 3, 2010.

**A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education**

Ladd’s years of research on educational issues led her to take a leadership role in A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education (BBA), which is a task force of more than 50 leaders—including researchers, educators, CEOs, and former presidential cabinet members—who have joined forces to apply the results of research to educational policy. In particular, the group seeks to expand education reform beyond school improvement to address social and economic issues that affect the learning environments of students and communities. Ladd is co-chair of BBA, which is funded by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and an anonymous donor. BBA has published an accountability statement outlining priorities for improving education in America, which was signed by all the original members plus hundreds of additional co-signers. The group is currently seeking more funding. “We have plans to set up a number of different groups to come together and develop the initial ideas of BBA much more fully,” Ladd says.

**Beyond Test Scores**

Another large-scale effort in education policy research that builds on the success of the Data Center is a two-year project funded by the Smith Richardson Foundation called Beyond Test Scores. The project documents connections between standardized test scores (and other school data) and life trajectories such as high school graduation, post-secondary education, and criminal activity.

Charles Clotfelter, professor of public policy, economics, and law, is principal investigator of the project; as such, he leads a team of a dozen researchers. “I look with great pride on this group. It’s the largest group of researchers that I’ve been associated with at Duke that are engaged in the same basic project,” says Clotfelter, who has been at Duke for 30 years. In that time, he says, more and more social scientists have become interested in similar questions relating to social policy. “As this number has grown, the thought was to have an effort that integrates the work of these various social scientists,” he says. Another goal of the project is to enrich the Data Center with new connections to public agencies such as North Carolina Community Colleges and the Department of Corrections.

Beyond Test Scores has four parts: weekly meetings of the research team and associated post-docs, expanding the Data Center to include data from other institutions, carrying out research using those data linkages, and hosting a final capstone conference in 2011.

During the weekly meetings, researchers discuss ongoing statistical analyses, obstacles and discoveries in the different
projects, and novel ways to use the data available at the Data Center. They also hear presentations by invited guests from the public sector, including the Department of Corrections, DPI, the North Carolina Employment Security Commission, and the North Carolina Community College System.

Test Scores and Economic Shocks

Three research projects are currently underway. One project is examining the relationship between school performance and “economic shocks” in a community, such as the closing of a large factory. The researchers are Elizabeth Oltmans Ananat, assistant professor of public policy and economics; Anna Gassman-Pines, assistant professor of public policy and psychology and neuroscience; and Christina M. Gibson-Davis, assistant professor of public policy, psychology, and sociology. They compiled the Business Closings Database, which catalogs all job losses in North Carolina between 1990 and 2007, with information on types of business or industry and the number of workers affected. The researchers are estimating the impact of job loss in a community on children’s test scores. Results so far indicate that children from lower income families are more likely to suffer reduced test scores after a community experiences an economic shock.

Test Scores and Attendance at Community Colleges

The second project is looking for connections between school performance and community college attendance and graduation. Clotfelter, Ladd, Muschkin, and Vigdor are analyzing data to look at the characteristics of public school students who choose to attend community college, including information such as eighth-grade math scores and proximity of the high school to the community college. They are also looking at the characteristics of students who successfully graduate from community college; for example, does taking a required math course earlier in high school rather than later increase the odds of success in community college? The results could help steer potentially successful students to community colleges and help them be more successful once there.

Test Scores and the Criminal Justice System

The third project is seeking to answer the question: is there a set of circumstances in school that are predictive for involvement in the criminal justice system? A research team led by Phil Cook and Clara Muschkin is analyzing the test scores and other school data of people who are in prison or on probation.

“We’re really trying to make connections between ivory tower research and social policy,” Clotfelter says. “One reason is that it makes our research better to be more informed by real policy questions. The other reason is that Duke, like other research universities, has a service mission and this directly satisfies that mission.”

Education Leadership Summit

On February 20, 2002, the Center hosted the first gathering of the current and former secretaries of education. Clockwise from lower left, they are U.S. Secretary of Education Roderick Paige; former U.S. Secretaries of Education Lauro F. Cavazos, William J. Bennett, Lamar Alexander, and Richard W. Riley; and former North Carolina Governor James B. Hunt. Shirley Hufstedler, the first secretary of education, was unable to attend at the last minute due to an illness.

Ken Dodge, director of the Center, says, “I was surprised to learn that this was not an old boys club. I found myself, amazingly, introducing one secretary to another.”

Each secretary discussed a major issue he confronted during his tenure and his vision of the future of K-12 education in America, and then they participated in a roundtable discussion moderated by former Governor Jim Hunt. The secretaries discussed No Child Left Behind, which had been signed into law a month before, as well as accountability, character education, the teacher shortage, minority achievement gaps, and the need for global education in the aftermath of 9/11. A documentary of the summit was written and produced by Ken Dodge, filmed by UNC-TV, and broadcast nationally over public television, with on-screen hosts Ken Dodge and Ann Denlinger, superintendent of Durham Public Schools.
Much of the Center’s work on substance abuse is coordinated through the Transdisciplinary Prevention Research Center (TPRC), which was established in 2003 with funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). In 2008, funding from NIDA was renewed and expanded.

Simply put, the goal of the TPRC is to discover scientifically robust ways to reduce substance abuse by adolescents. The science behind that simple goal, however, is quite complex. For that reason, TPRC provides researchers from a wide variety of disciplines, including neurobiology, economics, epidemiology, genetics, public policy, psychology, sociology, and others, with funds for their work.

Phil Costanzo, co-principal investigator on the project along with Ken Dodge, says, “The TPRC encourages the finest researchers from multiple disciplines to examine and help us understand the nature of substance abuse, addiction, and other deviant behaviors. It goes all the way from looking at mouse brains to looking at humans interacting with each other.” Costanzo is a professor of psychology and neuroscience and associate director of the Center.

In the first phase of the TPRC, dozens of researchers tackled projects relating to how different aspects of adolescence affect substance use among teens, including the pressure to define the self, peer groups, and larger social structures in the community. “I think the TPRC has had a really good influence, not just by doing research and publishing papers, but by bringing people together from the Duke community who are first-rate scientists to think about how they might jointly use their science to solve important problems,” Costanzo says.

Rick Hoyle, professor of psychology and neuroscience and associate director of the Center, serves as director of the TPRC’s Methodology and Statistics Core. Under Rick’s leadership, members of this Core provide consultation and collaborate with TPRC investigators to ensure that measurement, design, and analysis concerns are addressed in a rigorous and innovative manner.

Mapping Teen Peer Groups

One group of researchers put together a comprehensive picture of peer groups at a Durham school that contains both middle and high school students. “We wanted to learn the social profile of teens prone to use at a young age,” Costanzo says. The researchers surveyed students as...
they progressed from the seventh grade to the eleventh grade, asking them not only about their use of substances such as alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, but also about their network of peers—who they chose to hang out with, who they didn’t want to hang out with, who was most popular, who was dating whom, and so forth. By surveying the students each year, the researchers could see how the peer groups changed over time.

“Among teens, distinctive behavior gives you power,” Costanzo says, “and social capital is frequently earned in proportion to the degree that your behavior deviates from adult social norms and parental expectations. We found that the kids who use cigarettes, alcohol, or drugs early are more central in their networks than those who start substance use later. About half of those early users stop using, but they continue to have centrality and power in their peer networks.”

Testing a Substance Abuse Prevention Model

A second project attempted to see if the power of adolescent leaders could be harnessed to reduce substance abuse. The researchers chose eighth graders who were identified by their peers as leaders, including the so-called “deviant” leaders (who might be called troublemakers by adults). Costanzo says those deviant leaders are often overlooked as strong social forces by adult authority, but they are just as socially competent and skillful as the non-deviant leaders.

These peer-identified leaders attended 16 sessions over eight weeks. To encourage the students to identify with positive leadership, the researchers brought in “valued” adults, including Duke athletes, performers, musicians, and artists, to speak with the students. The researchers provided the students with real data about the physiological effects of different substances and asked them to use that information to create a project, whether a film or a poem or music, to present to sixth graders to inform them of some of the pitfalls of substance use. “Our message to the student leaders wasn’t, ‘You change your behavior,’ it was ‘You are leaders and we ask you to use that power to present this information to younger kids in your
Making a Difference: The First 10 Years

Adolescent Problem Behavior

Preventing Youth Violence with Fast Track

Other researchers at the Center for Child and Family Policy are trying to identify and evaluate interventions to prevent youth violence. Ken Dodge, Center director, is one of the lead investigators of the comprehensive, multi-site intervention program called Fast Track, designed to prevent serious violence and antisocial behavior in high-risk children. When Dodge and his colleagues developed the program in the early 1990s, he says the thought was, “We will try to bring together the best of what we know about how to intervene, and bring it to the highest risk kids and see if we can have a genuine impact.”

Fast Track, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Institute on Drug Abuse, targets at-risk children in kindergarten and works with them, their parents, their teachers, and their peers for 10 years. Children receive academic tutoring and lessons in developing social skills.

The Next Phase of TPRC

The next phase of NIDA funding, which began in 2008, expands the TPRC from an “exploratory center” to a “fixed center.” Faculty working groups from many different disciplines meet to brainstorm collaborative research projects and discuss ongoing work. Some of the projects underway build on previous projects. For example, researchers are planning to collect DNA samples from the study participants in the Durham survey school, who are now in eleventh and twelfth grades. “We want to look at the interactions between genes and environment as they affect susceptibility to social influence and problems with self-regulation of behavior,” Costanzo says.

Costanzo says the next phase of the TPRC will include an increased focus on behavioral self-regulation and its relation to substance use and abuse. “Sensation-seeking, impulsivity, and a high preference for novelty are big predictors of drug use,” he says. Researchers also will be looking into the relationships between ADHD and substance abuse, and depression and substance abuse.

Safe Schools/Healthy Students

In 2000, Durham Public Schools (DPS) received a grant from the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program of the U.S. Departments of Education, Justice, and Health and Human Services. For the next four years, DPS implemented numerous programs at all grade levels, with the overall goal of increasing the safety of schools by reducing youth violence, substance abuse, and mental health problems. The Center for Child and Family Policy worked with DPS on many aspects of Safe Schools/Healthy Students.

David Rabiner, associate research professor of psychology and neuroscience and associate director of the Center says, “We worked closely with DPS in writing the grant and helping them acquire the funding in the first place. Then the Center served as the local evaluator and also provided consultation and training on some of the program elements.” Rabiner co-directed the evaluation along with several other research scientists at the Center.

Some of the programs that DPS provided in the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program were offered to all students in a school—such as social skills lessons for preschoolers and elementary school children. Others were targeted to at-risk children, such as intensive family support and several other prevention and treatment programs. Some of the elements grew out of programs that had been developed or tested at the Center and, for these, the Center provided training and other support.

Other organizations involved in DPS’s Safe Schools/Healthy Students project included the Durham Center, the Youth Coordinating Board, and the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice. The project ran from 2000 until 2004.

“A key aspect of the Safe Schools/Healthy Students program was that it demonstrated how the Center can assist partner organizations in multiple facets of a project—grant writing, intervention training, and evaluation. Safe Schools was a good example of the different levels at which the Center can be an important partner,” Rabiner says.
and regulating their behavior. Teachers and parents learn how to encourage the healthy emotional growth of the children and to work together to support the child at home and at school. Teachers also learn how to teach all children in the classroom social skills that reduce conflict, expanding the healthy context for the at-risk child.

At a cost of $60,000 per child, Fast Track is an expensive program, but an analysis of its effectiveness suggests that it could actually save money. “These high-risk kids cost society a lot of money,” Dodge says. Violent youth who grow up to be violent criminals cost society between $1.5 to $2 million each, including costs for special education services, the juvenile justice system, victim restitution, incarceration, and rehabilitation.

Evaluating Fast Track

Fast Track was piloted in four communities—Durham, Nashville, Seattle, and rural Pennsylvania—and the evaluation of its effectiveness is ongoing. The “children” in the program, who are now 23 and 24 years old, are interviewed annually.

Dodge says that, compared to a control group of highest-risk kids who didn’t participate in the program, Fast Track kids are less likely to be arrested for serious crimes, they have less reported antisocial behavior, and they cost society less in terms of mental health care and visits to pediatricians and hospitals. “At age 18, among the group initially at highest risk, 41% of the control kids were diagnosed with psychiatric conduct disorder, and only 21% of the intervention kids were diagnosed with it,” Dodge says.

Within the group of Fast Track participants, those with highest risk receive the greatest benefit. “This is not a program that makes sense for kids at minimal or moderate risk,” Dodge says.

For all the program’s successes, it doesn’t offer a 100% solution. “There are no miracles,” Dodge says. “These are high-risk kids; they struggle with life outcomes. Even with all this money and this intervention, many are arrested or don’t graduate from high school; a number of them are dead.”

Nevertheless, Fast Track is a proven way of reducing youth violence and, for that reason, it has been adopted in a number of communities around the United States, Britain, and Australia.

Dodge says, “I would say that the value of the Fast Track program and the value of the evaluation are to demonstrate unequivocally that these children who are at high risk don’t have to be destined for a life of crime. You can intervene.”

Clara Muchkin and daughter Isabel
Reaching Out to Families with Newborns through Durham Connects

In July 2008, the Center launched a wide-reaching project called Durham Connects, in cooperation with the Durham County Health Department and financially supported by The Duke Endowment. The goal of Durham Connects is to prevent child abuse in Durham County by helping families with newborns deal with stressors such as substance abuse, depression, financial distress, lack of childcare, and social isolation—all of which create increased risk for child abuse. “The idea is to give families all the support they need at a critical time,” says Jeannine Sato, who directs Durham Connects.

In the current phase of the project, the feasibility and effectiveness of the program are being evaluated in the context of the Durham community. For an 18-month period, nurses are making in-home visits to all families in Durham County who have infants who were born on even days. Outcomes will be compared with those for infants born on odd days. If the evaluation of the project shows that child maltreatment is lower in Durham Connects families than the others, the project will be expanded to serve all families in Durham County.

Building on the Durham Family Initiative

Durham Connects grew out of the Durham Family Initiative (DFI), a long-running project at the Center for Child and Family Policy that was first funded in 2002 by The Duke Endowment as a joint project with the nonprofit Center for Child and Family Health. At that time, Durham County had a higher rate of child maltreatment than the rest of the state, which itself was higher than the national average. DFI began working with local agencies and families in several Durham neighborhoods with high concentrations of at-risk families. DFI staff members introduced a county-wide effort called System of Care, in which local social service providers in Durham County came together to create a coordinated and networked approach to offering their services and resources to families.

“Several years in, our evaluation indicated that the child maltreatment rate in Durham County had gone down pretty significantly,” Sato says. The decrease may have been due to a combination of things: the work of the Durham Family Initiative, the System of Care, and the way the Department of Social Services was recording child maltreatment. “It was enough that The Duke Endowment felt there was progress being made and they wanted to continue with their investment,” Sato says. “Dr. Dodge’s plan was: Let’s take this to a universal scale where we’re reaching all families to prevent maltreatment.”
How Durham Connects Works

“How Durham Connects is for the entire community,” says Sato. “It isn’t just for at-risk families or poor families. We find a lot of advantaged families that are socially isolated and that can be just as dangerous and scary as not having enough money in the house.”

The program employs 11 nurses who visit families three to four weeks after a birth. A typical home visit lasts one to two hours, during which the nurse answers questions and assesses whether the family needs support. “We ask families: How are you doing? Do you have everything you need? If not, how can we connect you to the resources that exist?” Sato says. Each family is seen three to five times, including an initial hospital visit and a follow-up.

If the family is experiencing stress, the nurse refers them to a local resource that can help. Families that are really struggling may be referred to the Department of Social Services, whereas others may be given tips on choosing a quality daycare. Durham Connects maintains an enormous and up-to-the-minute database of all kinds of family resources—everything from housing assistance to mental health services to parenting classes.

Creating New Programs to Fill the Gap

Where resources are lacking, Durham Connects fills the gap. To help families whose relatives live far away, Durham Connects created the GrandParent Network of Durham, which matches up volunteer “grandparents” with socially isolated families for one year. “We also started the Cribs for Kids program because we have so many moms who didn’t have a safe place to put their babies down to sleep,” Sato says.

Families that receive referrals will be visited by a nurse one month later to see whether they have acted on the referral. Sato says they’ve found that most of the families do follow up.

Tracking Results

The Durham Family Initiative will continue to track child abuse and neglect rates; the project will also examine rates of pediatric hospital and emergency room visits as an additional measure of child wellbeing. Durham Connects plans to track other measures as well, including how often the participating families follow up on referrals, whether members of the family have a regular doctor, whether they are going to postpartum visits and well-baby visits.

“We want to get an overall picture of the wellbeing of the family,” Sato says. “How do we show that people are actually better off with this early intervention as opposed to waiting until there’s a problem?”

Evaluating Many Programs for Families

The Center has become a “go to” place for expert evaluation of many family programs. In 2002, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services began a pilot in 10 counties of the Multiple Response System (MRS)—a new way of responding to families that had been reported for suspected child abuse or neglect. The legislature mandated the pilot program and an evaluation of it. The Center was a natural choice to carry out the evaluation.

Holly McNeill, the MRS trainer with the North Carolina Division of Social Services, says, “MRS was a really difficult philosophical shift for a lot of the county staff, so having Duke do the evaluation has lent some credibility. Duke has been able to say that child safety is not hampered in any way.” McNeill says she has used some of the Center’s qualitative evaluations—specifically interviews with families and social workers in the pilot counties—to illustrate the benefits of MRS to counties just coming onboard.
What is MRS?

“A multiple response system is a more family-centered approach to working with families who have come to the attention of the Department of Social Services,” explains Christina Christopoulos, a research scholar at the Center. Currently, Christopoulos, Nicole Lawrence, and Katie Rosanbalm conduct the MRS evaluation project under the leadership of Ken Dodge, director of the Center for Child and Family Policy. North Carolina’s multiple response system (MRS) consists of two tracks—the traditional investigative track and a family assessment track that addresses the family’s strengths and needs and offers services and support as needed. All told, the MRS includes seven different strategies, which emphasize coordination of resources, building a support team including extended family and other natural supports as well as representatives from agencies, and “frontloading” of services, which means offering support to the family right away instead of waiting for a case decision, which may take 30-45 days.

Lawrence says there was a concern among legislators and others that the family assessment track might have an adverse impact on child safety because it doesn’t require a traditional forensic investigation. However, the evaluation has shown that child safety has been maintained during the implementation of MRS and that, in fact, MRS appears to have decreased the number of repeat cases, especially for counties that initiated MRS first.

Going Statewide and Continuing to Improve

After the 10-county pilot, MRS was introduced into 42 counties in 2004, and then all 100 counties in 2006. Center researchers have evaluated all three stages, and many of their suggested improvements have been put to use.

McNeill gives one example: “Duke made the recommendation that in order to do work in this MRS way, caseload numbers for the social workers needed to come down. Their recom-

Program Evaluation Services

Over the years, the Center for Child and Family Policy has developed impressive capabilities in the area of program evaluation. So much so that, in 2005, Program Evaluation Services was created as an umbrella to maximize the effectiveness of all evaluation projects and to increase the sharing of expertise among researchers. Examples of some of the larger program evaluation efforts at the Center include the evaluation of Safe Schools/Healthy Students in Durham Public Schools (see page 16); the evaluation of the Multiple Response System in the 100 North Carolina counties; and the Durham Family Initiative, which tracks child maltreatment in Durham County and other measures of family functioning (see page 19).

David Rabiner, associate research professor of psychology and neuroscience, associate director of the Center, and director of Program Evaluation Services, says, “We set this up as an entity because we’re looking to highlight the Center’s reputation of expertise in helping community organizations, state and local governments, and nonprofits evaluate and learn about the success of what they are doing. Program evaluation needs are becoming more and more important as money dries up and foundations and the like are becoming more interested in evidence-based programs.”

All researchers involved in Program Evaluation Services meet regularly to discuss the status of their work and share problems and solutions. Often, when a researcher runs into an obstacle on some aspect of a project, it’s something another researcher has dealt with before. Students often participate in the evaluations as research assistants, and they sometimes use information from the evaluations for independent study research projects.

As with all work at the Center, translation of the findings is a priority. Rabiner says, “One of the goals is not just to prepare reports for the organizations that hire us, but also to publish findings that may contribute to greater knowledge in the field.”
mendation was 1:8 and what we ended up getting from the General Assembly was 1:10. That is probably one of the lowest caseloads in the country. We really are in much better shape than many other states because of that caseload ratio."

As another example, Lawrence says the evaluation of the second phase showed a lack of standardized documentation, which led the state to require that for the next phase. The evaluations have also shown that front-loading is a particularly valuable strategy. Christopoulos says, “Front-loading is a good practice that needs to continue because we found that, in both the MRS counties and the control counties, families that received more front-loaded services were less likely to be reported again in the next six months.” Another recommendation coming out of the evaluations is to include funding for independent facilitators for the child and family team meetings.

The Next Phase of MRS Evaluation

That last recommendation will likely be shored up in the next phase of evaluation, which will focus on ways to maximize the effectiveness of child and family team (CFT) meetings. Lawrence and colleagues will be observing 100 CFT meetings in six counties to determine what factors lead to measurable improvements, such as time to case closure and rates of foster care placement. The researchers will compare meetings that adhere to the CFT model (for example, meetings that encourage strong youth and family voice, are focused on strengths, are sensitive to the client’s culture, etc.) against those that do not adhere to the model in relation to key family outcomes.

McNeill is looking forward to the Center’s continuing involvement and input. She says, “Duke did a really good job of coming out and talking to staff and attending all the MRS meetings. I know Christina and Nicole really well because they have been so involved. It has been a really, really good working relationship.”

Children in Contemporary Society

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

The Children in Contemporary Society (CCS) Certificate Program was created to encourage undergraduates to explore issues related to children and families through interdisciplinary coursework and to engage students in research that informs policy and practice. Christina Gibson-Davis, director of the program and assistant professor of public policy, says she and others at the Center developed the certificate program when they realized that students wanted to connect their major coursework to other disciplines and to real-world contexts. Students interested in family issues might be overlooking relevant courses, because they are spread out among different departments from education to economics. “If you were majoring in one discipline,” she says, “you might not be aware of courses in other disciplines that would be of interest to you.”

To earn the certificate, students must complete three required Children in Contemporary Society courses, one methodology course, and two electives. The signature of the program is a research project. “We want the students to choose a topic of interest to them and work one-on-one with a professor or mentor to produce an empirically rigorous article,” says Gibson-Davis.

After only three years, two students have already earned the CCS certificate and ten more are on track to complete the program in May 2010. “Early indications are that we are meeting a need in Duke undergraduate education,” Gibson-Davis says. “Students seem really happy with the program.”

Senior Sarah Rabiner, a sociology major, was hooked as soon as she took the cornerstone course CCS 150 with Clara Muschkin in her sophomore year. She says, “The certificate is really interdisciplinary and gives you this pretty diverse understanding of issues that kids face. And the faculty are great.”

For her research, Rabiner is studying the effects of gang presence on student attitudes toward school and behavior in school. When she graduates, she hopes to work in the Durham Public School system, with the juvenile justice system, or with Child Protective Services.

“The CCS certificate is really interdisciplinary and gives you this pretty diverse understanding of issues that kids face. And the faculty are great.” Sarah Rabiner, senior sociology major at Duke
Policy Engagement and Service Infrastructure

The Center for Child and Family Policy offers a wide range of support to faculty, researchers, and students to help them carry out research projects and to translate the results into action. By making it possible for researchers and students to work more efficiently, the Center is able to have a larger impact in our effort to improve the lives of children and families.

Policy Engagement

Jenni Owen, director of policy initiatives, and Joel Rosch, policy liaison, use their experience and contacts to help Duke researchers learn about policy issues, connect with policymakers, and communicate their research findings to policymakers and other leaders at the local, state, federal, and international levels. Before joining the Center, Owen was a senior policy advisor to Governor Jim Hunt and the planning director for the Hunt Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy. Rosch was a lead planner at the North Carolina Governor’s Crime Commission and the director of research and planning for the State Bureau of Investigation.

Owen says, “We try to connect the dots between the research generated here and policy or practice.” She and Rosch are well known in both government and the nonprofit world, so they can facilitate collaborations among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers; they field queries from all three groups on a weekly basis. A leader of a nonprofit might want to talk to a researcher who can help supply data for a grant proposal or give a presentation; a faculty member might want to know which legislator is most interested in a particular topic or what government agencies have funding available; a legislator might want to find out if there is a substance-abuse prevention program that has been shown to be effective. While many of these requests have a quick turnaround, Owen and Rosch also help with longer-term projects, such as writing policy briefs or producing other translational materials.

Owen says she and Rosch keep abreast of what’s happening in government and the policy world, and often give faculty members a call to let them know about an upcoming meeting on a topic of interest or to suggest some other opportunity for engagement. “It’s about advising, building relationships, and making research-to-policy links,” she says.

Consistent with Duke University’s strategic plan to use knowledge in the service of society, Center faculty and staff sit on legislative committees, provide testimony for Congress, write policy research briefs that have been disseminated to thousands of policymakers, and consult informally with government leaders.

Owen also directs the Family Impact Seminar series (see page 25), which is another way of communicating research results to policymakers—in this case, state legislators.
In 2003, the Center for Child and Family Policy was a founding member of the University-Based Child and Family Policy Consortium, a group of about 30 university centers and institutes that focus on family policy. The Center is now the administrative headquarters for the national consortium, and the Center’s Jenni Owen is executive director.

“The main purpose of the consortium is to create and carry out opportunities for these related centers around the country to do more collectively than they could do alone,” says Owen, who is also director of policy initiatives at the Center.

The consortium provides resources to members and other interested parties, such as policy-relevant materials, a compendium of syllabi, and a directory of the centers, all of which are available at the consortium’s website (http://www.childpolicyuniversityconsortium.com/). The website also has a guide to careers in child and family policy, including a searchable directory of internships and jobs.

The consortium recently conducted a strategic planning process with the goal of working toward long-term sustainability and more focused and effective initiatives, including joint research projects and policy memos on state and federal issues.

Since her arrival at the Center in 2003, Owen has seen a change in the amount of policy engagement among faculty and staff. “Most, if not all, Center researchers and many of the staff have interaction with public sector officials and other community stakeholders such as nonprofit leaders and child advocates,” Owen says. “There are a lot of people at the Center talking about policy now who weren’t talking about it before.”

Duke University School Research Partnership Office

Many researchers and students at the Center do research in local or nearby public schools, and it’s all made possible—or at least much easier—by the Duke University School Research Partnership (SRP) Office, which was established in 2006 as a joint initiative of the Center and the Office of the Provost.

David Rabiner, associate research professor of psychology and neuroscience and associate director of the Center, is the faculty liaison for the School Research Partnership Office, and Owen is the schools’ liaison. Rabiner says the original goal of the SRP was to help Duke researchers and students conduct research in the Durham Public Schools (DPS). At that time, Duke researchers approaching DPS on their own were having a hard time gaining access, despite a long history of collaboration between Duke and DPS.

In short order, SRP re-established a good working relationship with staff at DPS and provided the Duke community with resources—including an online manual—to help streamline applications to the school system. Today, Duke researchers and students are active not just in DPS but in neighboring school systems as well, such as Orange, Wake, Granville, Chatham, and Vance counties.

Building on that success, Rabiner says, “We’ve really tried to expand what the office does to further enhance collaborative activity between Duke faculty and Durham Public Schools.” For example, this year SRP started a program in which Duke undergraduates work as “research consultants” for DPS to investigate topics of interest to the schools, such as the effectiveness of different programs for academically gifted students, ways of increasing parental involvement in the school, or how the nutritional value of school lunches affects students’ cognitive and behavioral functioning. “The students are functioning as researchers on behalf of DPS principals, Board members, and administrators,” Rabiner says. “The goal next year is to reform this from a collection of independent study projects to a regular class where students would take on one of these projects as part of the class.”

Another SRP project, just getting underway, is a faculty-to-faculty exchange in which Duke researchers will meet with local teachers in small groups or make presentations directly to their students.

The services of SRP are available not just to Center researchers and students but any researcher at Duke, including the medical center.
Proposal Development and Grants Management

Since its inception, the Center has offered assistance with grant proposal development and submission and grants management support to its researchers. When an investigator contemplates a research study, many issues must be resolved, such as what agency might provide funding, how the project can be framed in an exciting way, where the research will be conducted, whether there is adequate space, whether the research can be conducted ethically, and who will manage the budget and hiring. These challenges sometimes stop researchers before they get started. The Center has created a system of proposal development and grants management that has proven highly successful.

The system starts with a voluntary in-house peer review committee who meets with the researcher, helps identify possible funding sources, assists with assembling the optimal research team, and provides critical feedback on ideas and writing. In some cases, the Center provides resources for feasibility and pilot studies. The crux of a successful grant is a worthy, novel idea and the committee helps nurture ideas.

In preparation for submission of the proposal, “The grants management staff works with the principal investigator to develop the budget and budget justification,” says Barbara Pollock, associate director of administration for the Center. “We read the Request for Applications so that we are familiar with details such as the due date and other guidelines for the submission, the forms and format required, and restrictions that might be imposed,” she says. Pollock and other grants managers assist investigators in gathering biosketches and other supporting documents. They enter the proposal in Duke’s Sponsored Projects System and circulate the proposal for sign-off by various departmental representatives and Duke’s Office of Research Support.

Past Titles in the North Carolina Family Impact Seminar series:

- **2005** Medicaid Cost Containment Strategies in North Carolina and Other States
- **2006** Children’s Mental Health: Strategies for providing high-quality and cost-effective care
- **2007** Juvenile or Adult? Adolescent offenders and the line between the juvenile and criminal justice systems
- **2008** Dropout Prevention: Strategies for improving high school graduation rates
- **2009** Evidence-Based Policy: Strategies for improving outcomes and accountability

“The Family Impact Seminars are energizing for legislators and legislative staff. It is extremely useful to learn directly from experts about research, policy options, and resources specific to North Carolina. The materials and presenters are always top-notch.”

Representative Rick Glazier, North Carolina House District 45
Working with Community Organizations in South Africa

In July 2010, Jenni Owen, associate director of the Center, will lead a group of nine Duke undergraduates to Wentworth, a community in Durban, South Africa, for eight weeks. The students will work with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that aim to improve the quality of life for people who live in Wentworth, a mostly poor community of self-described “coloured” South Africans. The trip is one of many offered through DukeEngage, a campus-wide program funded by The Duke Endowment and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that encourages Duke undergraduates to participate in service projects in their own backyards and/or around the world.

Students will live in homes with Wentworth families and spend their days working with a local organization, such as a primary school, a community computer center, a domestic violence support program, or an HIV treatment and education facility. While students are donating their time and energy to the local NGOs, they will be immersed in cross-cultural collaboration, learning strategies for building the capacity of small organizations, and practicing real-world problem solving.

One of the students going on the trip is Utrophia Robinson, a junior from Atlanta who has never been out of the country before. Robinson is majoring in African and African-American studies, and she’s very interested in experiencing a country in transition. “Post-apartheid South Africa is still very fresh and the aftermath is very much observable now,” she says. She also likes the community service aspect of the trip. In Durham, she tutors local schoolchildren through the America Reads and America Counts program. “When I heard about a program that would let me study a part of my major and do community service in another country, I was all for it,” she says.
Muschkin helps researchers figure out whether their project needs to go through IRB and, if so, whether it requires a full, expedited, or exempt review. She stays up-to-date by consulting often with IRB staff. In addition, Muschkin occasionally gives workshops to Center researchers or students about the IRB process and research ethics.

Faculty and Staff Development

The Center’s success is based on staying one step ahead of the Zeitgeist. In order to position faculty, researchers, and staff members to remain in leadership positions, the Center provides its members with resources for continuing education, attendance at conferences, travel to other laboratories, tuition for workshops, and library research materials. The Center hosts outside speakers and visitors and supports career development through numerous externally-funded training programs and individual research.

In addition, Jane Costello, professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, joined the Center in 2008 as associate director for research. She works closely with junior faculty and research scientists as they prepare to submit grant proposals and further their professional careers.

Title | Date
---|---
Reducing Substance Use Initiation among Adolescents: Bringing Science Down to Earth | October 13-14, 2008
Community Prevention of Child Maltreatment | October 8-9, 2007
Peer Influence Processes in Youth | October 9-10, 2006
Family-School Relations during Adolescence: Linking Interdisciplinary Research and Practice | July 20-21, 2006
Immigrant Families in America: Multidisciplinary Views on the 21st Century | May 19-20, 2006
Preventing Depression in Adolescent Girls: Building a Multidisciplinary Approach | May 17-18, 2005
Supporting Latino Achievement in North Carolina Schools | March 21-22, 2003
Aggression, Antisocial Behavior, and Violence Among Girls: A Developmental Perspective | May 17-18, 2002
Education Leadership Summit | February 20, 2002
Improving Student Achievement: Lessons From Urban Schools | November 10-12, 2000
Children’s Peer Relations: From Development to Intervention to Policy: A Festschrift in honor of John D. Coie | May 19-20, 2000
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Project/Department</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pamela Ahrens</td>
<td>Director, Fast Track Data Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>Whitney Arroyave</td>
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<td>Marcella Hansen Boynton</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Madeleine Carriq</td>
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<td>Christina Christopoulos</td>
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<td>Jennifer Godwin</td>
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<td>Megan Hannah</td>
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<td>Erika Hanszely-Layko</td>
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<td>Brett Holmstrom</td>
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<td>Clarine Hyman</td>
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<td>Joel B. Rosch</td>
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<td>Chongming Yang</td>
<td>Research Scientist, Transdisciplinary Prevention Research Center</td>
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In addition, 20+ part-time interviewers assist with various Center projects.
“Scientists at the Center do a great job in bridging the research-to-practice divide. They are able to really understand the scientific literature and translate it into language that folks who aren’t scientists are able to understand and use to make better decisions.”

Michelle Hughes, vice president for programs at Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina
“Make a difference.”

William Chafe, former dean of the faculty of the Trinity College of Arts and Sciences, in his charge to the Center for Child and Family Policy ten years ago.