The Center for Child and Family Policy is evaluating America’s Promise Alliance’s ambitious program to improve the lives of young people in America. In January 2008, America’s Promise Alliance—the nation’s largest multi-sector youth-focused collaborative—launched a series of initiatives targeted at improving the lives of 15 million children in five years. These initiatives seek to raise awareness of the issues facing young people and foster local solutions in targeted communities across America.

Research Scientist Beth Gifford is leading the Center’s multi-pronged evaluation of these initiatives. The goal is to assess the effectiveness of the Alliance and provide feedback to allow the organization to make decisions with the best available information.

One Alliance initiative that powerfully exemplifies this overarching strategy is the Dropout Prevention Summit Initiative. Nationwide, nearly one in four U.S. high school students fails to graduate. Among minority students, the problem is even more severe: nearly half of African-American and Hispanic students do not complete high school on time. Individuals who drop out of high school are more likely to become unemployed, live in poverty, and/or be incarcerated.

With funding from the Alliance, each state and 55 communities will assemble a multi-sector coalition to plan and implement a Dropout Prevention Summit by mid-2010. The goals of the summits are to catalyze collaboration from key stakeholders in these communities, draw increased attention to the issue, and gain commitment to the development and implementation of local plans of action.

Early in the development of the Dropout Prevention Summit Initiative, the Alliance and the Duke evaluation team developed a theory of change in order to understand how the summits can mobilize local communities and improve national high school completion rates. For these key steps, the evaluation team has designed a data collection scheme to monitor progress and assess the initial effect the initiative is having in targeted communities. The team is collecting data from numerous sources to provide multiple perspectives on the progress of the initiative. These sources include:

- Interviews and surveys with summit conveners, summit attendees, and post-summit workgroups.

continued on page 3
With great pride, this year we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University. The idea for the Center grew in the mid-1990s when a group of Duke faculty members met with university administrators to consider how they could bring their scientific research in child development to bear on important problems in contemporary society. With a bold capital investment and risky hiring by Dean of Arts and Sciences Bill Chafe, the Center was born. I was the risky hire and am grateful to Bill and to Sanford School of Public Policy leader Phil Cook for the opportunity.

Ten years later, the Center is flourishing as a national leader in research in social policy, as a State of North Carolina leader in public policy engagement, and as a Duke University leader in bridging the university and community. How have we done it? We brought together strong people and invested in them. We hired fledgling postdoctoral fellows, savvy policymakers who were ready to invade the ivory tower, street-smart interventionists, and a brilliant administrator in Barbara Pollock. We then brought together esteemed Duke faculty members from across diverse disciplines to deploy this human capital to start creative ventures. There was high risk, no doubt. But the investment has paid off handsomely in financial terms, in national reputation, and in genuine contribution to the lives of children and families.

This edition of Bridge highlights a sampling of the splendid work being conducted by Center researchers and faculty. Our core effort is scientific discovery. We highlight the study of the impact of parents’ discipline strategies on children’s development. Associate Research Professor Jennifer Lansford and Project Coordinator Ann Skinner have assembled a team of investigators from more than a dozen cultures to learn how parents’ discipline practices affect children’s behavioral development. They want to know whether spanking is effective and whether children suffer or grow from the discipline that they receive. This study is the largest known multi-cultural effort of its kind. Like many Center efforts, the important research questions in this study are also being addressed in other studies, such as Research Scientist Lisa Berlin’s study of spanking in Early Head Start children, which brought national media attention.

The Center’s interactive climate encourages the translation of scientific discoveries to engagement in public policy and practice. This issue of Bridge reports on the Center’s work in reforming the State of North Carolina child welfare system, which is charged with responding to reports of child abuse. But the impact spreads even farther. Law professors Doriane Coleman and Kathy Bradley have taken up the problem of child abuse in the law. In an upcoming special issue of Law and Contemporary Problems devoted to the topic of Corporal Punishment from International, Comparative, and Interdisciplinary Perspectives, they bring together scientific research with legal and policy analysis to formulate models for reform in how the problem of child abuse is addressed by the courts.

Virtually of the Center’s research and policy engagement activities include students as a living laboratory for learning. This issue highlights the Center’s undergraduate certificate program in Children in Contemporary Society, which will graduate its first full cohort of undergraduate seniors next spring, thanks to the leadership of Assistant Professor of Public Policy Christina Gibson-Davis, Assistant Research Professor Clara Muschkin, and administrative leader Barbara Pollock.

The Bridge cannot possibly report all of the Center’s news and accomplishments, which seem to happen every day. You will have to ask around to hear about the new NIDA-funded Transdisciplinary Prevention Research Center grant, the renewal of the Center’s North Carolina Education Research Data Center grant from the Spencer Foundation, ongoing agreements to help the Hill Learning Center evaluate its unique educational program for children with learning differences, and new NIH R01 grants in violence prevention. Better yet, go to our new and improved website at www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu.

Thanks.

Kenneth A. Dodge
Effort to Curb School Dropout  continued from page 1

- Media tracking of print and television coverage of the Dropout Prevention Summits.
- Baseline information from a variety of public sources related to high school completion, college readiness, volunteering (a measure of civic engagement), and children’s health insurance coverage.

Dropout prevention efforts need to involve individuals who represent many facets of the community, including government, education, nonprofit, media, parents, and youth to be effective.

To date, the Alliance has sponsored 40 summits that have attracted more than 14,500 attendees and engaged more than 950 organizations in summit planning and the development of community action plans. Attendees overwhelmingly rate the summit quality as “excellent” and believe the summits provide useful information and resources. Encouraging findings include:

- 86 percent of attendees who responded to a post-summit survey stated that they learned something new and useful about the dropout problem in their community;
- 77 percent stated that they learned about local dropout prevention-related efforts of which they were previously unaware;
- 92 percent thought the work they do around the dropout issue will be positively affected by the summit;
- 83 percent thought that the summit would lead to change in their community.

Most notably, initial evidence gathered by CCFP’s evaluation suggests that the America’s Promise planning process is engaging a broad range of community organizations in summit planning, implementation, and action plan development. More than 700 organizations have engaged in the planning and implementation of the Dropout Prevention Summits so far. The majority of these organizations represent the sectors of education, non-profit, and government. Furthermore, the business sector constitutes more than 10 percent of the participating organizations, and the majority of planning committees include at least one elected official.

These committees provide critical leadership for organizing a successful summit and producing sustained community commitment to address the dropout crisis. According to Grad Nation: A Guidebook to Help Communities Tackle the Dropout Crisis, dropout prevention efforts need to involve individuals who represent many facets of the community, including government, education, nonprofit, media, parents, and youth to be effective.3

While most summits have brought together a large group to discuss dropout prevention and produce a community action plan, it is yet unknown whether or not this initiative will lead to sustainable change. To assess this, the evaluation will continue to monitor progress in all summit communities through a series of post-summit surveys that will assess the level of collaboration, commitment to action, and accomplishments involving new or strengthened local policies or programs.

In addition to collecting these data, the evaluation will continue to monitor trends in high school completion and college readiness at the national, state, and local (where available) levels, to assess whether the nation is experiencing gains in key markers of children’s success.

The North Carolina Dropout Prevention Summit was held in Raleigh on October 22, 2009. The summit brought together leadership teams consisting of three to five representatives from each county in North Carolina. The leadership teams developed strategies to take back to their local communities. The intention was that the N.C. summit would serve as the launching point for regional follow-up summits. Please contact Mark Carrington of Communities in Schools at graduationsummit@cisnc.org for more information.

In addition to Beth Gifford, Center researchers working on this evaluation include Yu Bai, Leslie Babinski, Lisa Berlin, Cas Cogswell, Ashley Corra, Audrey Foster, and Jose Sandoval.

2 Education Week Research Center, 2009. Analysis of data from the Common Core of Data (U.S. Department of Education).
The Adolescent Health Initiative of Durham

by Yvonne Wasilewski

On a typical day at the Durham County Health Department, certified health educator Rebecca Greco-Koné provides health education and risk behavior reduction counseling for teens on prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). But her work doesn’t end there. “Young people in Durham are experiencing a number of stressors in their lives, and they want to talk about it with someone who can help them get the services they need,” Koné said. “Many times, the youth I talk with are concerned about finding a job or getting their GED, or they are experiencing feelings of depression or are overwhelmed with the stressors in their lives. Many want help to quit smoking marijuana or to eat healthier and exercise more.”

The health care system as currently structured rarely addresses the often complex and interrelated medical, mental, and psychosocial needs of adolescents. Health care for adolescents is fragmented—it operates in the traditional silos of primary care, mental health, and specialty care, and has many barriers to accessing services. As a result, many adolescents with modifiable health problems and risk-taking behaviors miss needed care at significant cost to the community.

The Adolescent Health Initiative (AHI) is a collaboration between the Durham community and Duke University Medical Center tasked with developing a plan to improve the health of adolescents (ages 10-24). The plan will call for integration of medical and mental health care and multidisciplinary care coordination, work to build on existing services, and be based on evidence-based protocols found to be effective in improving the delivery of services. AHI is also focusing on using innovative technology to redesign the delivery of health services and to provide connected care for youth ages 10-24.

The AHI is one of ten projects sponsored by Durham Health Innovations and funded by the National Institutes of Health and the Duke Center for Community Research. Each of the projects has received $100,000 to develop a plan to address its targeted area of disease or disorder. The final plans are to be presented to the Durham Health Innovations oversight committee by December 4, 2009.

“We are using a community-based participatory research process in order to create our plan,” said Yvonne Wasilewski, a research scientist at the Center for Child and Family Policy. A steering committee consisting of more than 60 individuals representing the community is involved in every phase of the planning process. Guided by a logic model, the steering committee meets monthly to identify and execute the steps needed to complete the plan. These steps include focus groups with parents, youth, and service providers to identify the health needs of adolescents; key informant and stakeholder interviews to identify present services gaps and desired features of the new model; review and documentation of evidence-based models of adolescent health care to inform the design of the model; and town hall meetings to get critical feedback on the model. “One unique aspect of the project is the ability to analyze data from the Duke Support Repository and conduct geospatial mapping of health care utilization, prevalence of illness, and markers for risk-taking behavior in adolescents to better enable us to plan interventions in this population,” said Kristin Ito, assistant consulting professor at Duke University Medical Center.

A major strength of the Adolescent Health Initiative is the contribution of adolescents from Durham through its Youth Advisory Group. The group is led by Donald Hughes, a 21-year-old native of Durham and recent graduate from UNC-Greensboro who recently ran for City Council. “Our mission is to engage young people across Durham in the process of addressing the health concerns of our community. One of our first projects is to use technology to develop a multimedia/documentary project about health issues in Durham, based on personal experience or the experiences of family and friends. The stories created and told by our youth group will help prioritize the kinds of health education that will take place in our model and be the basis to advocate for issues that will improve the health of adolescents in the Durham community.”

Members of the collaborative include a wide range of individuals and organizations in Durham (including youth) who have a vested interest in the health of adolescents. The project is co-chaired by Nancy Kent, LPC, child mental health specialist for the Durham Center and Kristin Ito, MD, MPH, in the Department of Pediatrics at Duke University Medical Center. The project evaluator is Yvonne Wasilewski, PhD, MPH, research scientist, Center for Child and Family Policy.

The AHI Youth Advisory Group

From left to right: Erin Roberts, Donald Hughes (group leader), Meghan Woods, Cedesha Thompson, Robert Hines, Jimmy Woods (front)

PHOTO CREDIT: YVONNE WASILEWSKI

Fall 2009
Computers for Students Can Be Counterproductive

by Jacob L. Vigdor reprinted from The Herald-Sun (Durham), Aug. 14, 2009

A year and a half ago, I drove to a small rural town in North Carolina to talk with public school officials. My talk had nothing to do with students and computers. But, at the time, I was assembling a research paper that found when students gained access to home computers, their reading and math test scores declined. When they added high-speed Internet service, their scores declined further.

Imagine my surprise, then, when the school superintendent told me he intended to scrap his textbook budget for the upcoming year and, instead, purchase laptop computers for his sixth-grade students.

Since then, I have spoken with numerous public officials in the United States and abroad who feel it is absolutely vital to erase the “digital divide,” the gap in access to computers between rich and poor children. From Maine to Michigan, and from the Texas hill country to the Australian outback, they have pledged their scarce tax dollars to providing students universal access to computers.

But as a new school year is about to kick off, these officials may want to rethink their positions.

The case for using public funds to buy children computers, whether for use at school or home, sounds quite sensible when you first hear it. Many, if not all, of the well-paying jobs of the 21st century will require basic computer skills. Computer technology can assist students in learning at their own pace. Computers can bring the resources of the world’s largest libraries to even the most remote outpost.

All this is true. The problem, though, is that the modern computer is not only a tool for productivity, but for entertainment.

Expecting a 12-year-old to use a computer for productivity only, and not for diversion, is as unreasonable as expecting him or her to watch only educational programs on television, or to use the telephone solely for emergencies.

We, the rational adults, know that the productive use is best in the long run. The teenage brain, however, is wired to ignore the long run.

This simple neurological fact helps make sense of the results of my study (co-authored with two Duke colleagues, Charles Clotfelter and Helen Ladd).

To measure the impact of computer ownership on basic academic skills, we tracked survey information provided by students in North Carolina public schools as they progressed from age 9 until age 14. Among the hundreds of thousands of students in our sample, about one in 10 reported having no computer in their home when they were young, but their family acquiring one as they got older.

We compared these students’ performance on standardized tests in reading and math before and after the computer arrived. We performed a similar before-and-after comparison to gauge the impact of the introduction of broadband service in each student’s zip code.

Across the board, the impacts were negative. Not catastrophically negative, but clearly inconsistent with the view that students use computers and the Internet primarily to further their studies.

The problem is that the modern computer is not only a tool for productivity, but for entertainment.

This doesn’t mean a conscientious parent (or taxpayer) should throw out junior’s computer. But it does remind us that from an adolescent’s perspective, a computer is a toy that also happens to have some school-related uses, rather than the other way around. Left to his or her own devices, a child will most likely find novel and interesting ways to waste time with a computer. The solution is not so much to remove the computer as to find better ways of guiding and monitoring students in using it.

Beyond the obvious implications for a family’s own choices, there’s an important policy implication here, namely that government programs that aim to close the “digital divide” might actually worsen other racial and economic disparities of far greater social concern: basic literacy and numeracy.

We can legislate access to computers, but we can’t legislate access to a conscientious adult in the home to monitor their use.

Jacob L. Vigdor is a professor of public policy and economics at Duke University, and a faculty research fellow in the National Bureau of Economic Research. His research focuses on educational achievement.
Is Weighted Student Funding an Answer?
by Mary-Russell Roberson

When it comes to education policy and reform in the United States, there are more questions than answers. Lots of ideas for reform sound great on paper—but do they really work? One way to get at that question, says Helen “Sunny” Ladd, a CCFP faculty member, is to explore educational systems in other countries.

“There’s a global marketplace of ideas in education policy reform,” she said. “There aren’t any easy answers, but there are useful insights to be gained by looking at policies in other countries.”

Ladd, the Edgar T. Thompson Distinguished Professor of Public Policy and professor of economics, spent the spring 2009 semester doing just that. She and her husband, Edward Fiske, a former education editor of the New York Times, lived in Amsterdam from January through June, studying weighted student funding in the Netherlands.

Weighted student funding means three things in the Netherlands: funding follows each student to his or her school, different students are allocated different amounts of funding (based on degree of “educational disadvantage”), and individual schools can choose how to use the money. In general, educationally disadvantaged students are defined as those whose parents have less formal education. Schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students often use their extra funding to reduce class sizes, benefiting all students at the school.

Ladd and Fiske analyzed the performance of primary schools in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht using data from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; the Dutch Inspectorate of Education; local municipalities; and school boards. They also visited schools and interviewed researchers, educators, parents, and government officials. These four cities have a relatively high percentage of immigrants, making them somewhat analogous to American inner-city schools.

Does weighted student funding work? The answer, said Ladd and Fiske, is a qualified yes. It has been used in the Netherlands successfully since 1985, and it clearly works as a system to send more funds to schools serving higher percentages of disadvantaged students. Ladd and Fiske found that these schools have more teachers and support staff per pupil.

On the other hand, they found that weighted student funding does not succeed in providing equal educational opportunities at all Dutch schools—that is, the system has not reached the point where a student of a given aptitude would perform equally well at all schools. It’s possible that weighted student funding helps level the playing field; unfortunately, it’s impossible to measure just how much. But overall, Dutch students score higher than students from the United States and many other developed countries on international achievement tests. And Dutch children whose mothers have limited education outperform such students from other developed countries on the Programme for International Student Assessment.

Would weighted student funding improve student achievement in the United States? That’s a trickier question. “Just because a country like the Netherlands has high achievement doesn’t mean that country has a better education system,” Ladd said. For example, it’s likely that Dutch children have a head start from the first day of school: the Netherlands consistently scores at the top of 21 developed countries on the UNICEF scale for child well-being, whereas the United States scores near the bottom.

“We have to be careful about making these gross comparisons between countries because there are so many differences across cultures,” Ladd said. “We need to delve into issues in sufficient depth to see why a policy would work in one country and may or may not work somewhere else.” Dutch culture values pluralism, tolerance, and providing opportunities to disadvantaged groups. One result: a collection of government policies designed to address the achievement gap, including pre-school and school-readiness programs for low-income and less educated families and those who have recently immigrated.

Furthermore, Ladd said, the Dutch educational system itself differs from the American system in respects other than funding. For decades, all Dutch parents have been able to choose where to send their children to school. Schools are autonomous and run by elected school boards. The vast majority of funding comes from the federal, not local, government. Schools tend to be more segregated socio-economically than those in the United States. This is partly a result of immigration patterns and partly a legacy from the pre-World War II era when schools and society were segregated by religion. Today, most schools identify themselves as Protestant, Catholic, Islamic, Hindu, or “public.” Families often choose schools that reflect their values at home.

“Weighted funding sounds wonderful because we all know that it’s often more challenging to educate students from disadvantaged backgrounds than it is to educate students from a middle class background,” Ladd said. “But one of the lessons we take away from the Dutch system is that it takes a certain culture and set of values to initiate and sustain this type of weighted funding.”

Ladd and Fiske have written two working papers and are preparing journal articles and conference presentations about their findings. In the past, they have studied educational policy in New Zealand and South Africa. Ladd, who is an economist, said, “We’re a good team because Ted is a superb journalist. I look at the data and he looks at the schools and we try to put it all together in a coherent story.”
The Parenting Across Cultures (PAC) project is a multicultural study that examines how parents’ discipline strategies and other aspects of parent-child relationships affect children’s development. This has been an exciting year for PAC. To date, interviews have been conducted with more than 300 families in Durham as well as with almost 900 mothers, fathers, and children in China, Italy, Kenya, the Philippines, Sweden, and Thailand. Families in these countries are now participating in follow-up interviews. In addition, initial interviews are now being conducted in Colombia and Jordan. Each interview lasts one to two hours and addresses questions related to parents’ warmth, control, discipline strategies, attitudes, and beliefs, as well as questions about children’s behavior, attitudes, and beliefs.

A recently awarded research grant from the Fogarty International Center will supplement the original research grant from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute on Child Health and Human Development to fund the addition of the Jordan site. Professor Suha Al-Hassan of Hashemite University and Professor Osama Obeidat of the Jordan Education Initiative visited the Center for Child and Family Policy in July to plan for data collection in Jordan and to meet with Center researchers doing related work.

Jennifer Lansford has collaborated with Al-Hassan and Obeidat on three 2009 publications related to education reform in Jordan. These studies evaluate a major education reform in Jordan—the implementation of public kindergartens. Although first grade is mandatory in Jordan, kindergarten is not. Until recently, kindergartens were either not available to most children or were available only in the private sector. However, Jordan is now in a period of education reform. Since 2003, the Ministry of Education has established 532 public kindergartens in Jordan. Nevertheless, this number remains small in comparison with 4,127 kindergartens owned and operated by the private sector. Currently, approximately 40 percent of Jordanian children go to kindergarten (in both the public and private sectors). Prior to the recent education reform, approximately 30 percent of Jordanian children attended kindergarten; the goal of the Ministry of Education is to increase kindergarten enrollment to 50 percent by 2012. The PAC project provides an opportunity to move outside the realm of schools to study family life in Jordan.

In July, the PAC project was pleased to welcome Maria Concetta Miranda to the Center for Child and Family Policy as a visiting research fellow. Miranda was a doctoral student at the Second University of Naples in the Department of Psychology, where she worked on the PAC project’s Naples site. Miranda received a fellowship through her university in Naples to travel to the United States for three months. While at Duke, Miranda worked closely with PAC Research Coordinator Ann Skinner to learn more about data collection at the Durham site and to assist in the management of the international data. In October, Miranda returned to Naples to defend her dissertation, a study of parental monitoring during adolescence.

The international team currently is preparing a set of papers for a special issue of the journal Parenting: Science and Practice that will focus on parents’ attributions regarding causes of success and failure in parenting situations and parents’ attitudes with respect to children’s obedience and autonomy in each of the nine participating countries.
History of the course

When I agreed to teach “Children in Contemporary Society,” in spring semester 2007, I found the prospect of developing a completely new course both exciting and challenging. The course was to serve as the cornerstone for the newly minted undergraduate CCS Certificate Program, but would be open to students from all disciplines. In its first iteration, there was no way of predicting the number of students who would be interested, or the variety of intellectual interests and academic concentrations that students would bring to the classroom.

Luckily, student interest in the course and enthusiasm for the subject matter became evident from the beginning; the course has since been offered each semester and fills its capacity at around 25 students. Enrollment in the CCS certificate program has increased steadily as well.

The CCS course in context of the CCS certificate program

In 2005, faculty within the Center for Child and Family Policy, led by Christina Gibson-Davis, identified a need within the undergraduate curriculum: to provide an opportunity for students to engage in the study of children’s issues, through a program that involved interdisciplinary course-taking and research opportunities.

The CCS certificate was created, with the mission of providing an interdisciplinary framework for students to develop their interests by learning about children and families, engaging in empirical research, and understanding the implications of research for policy and practices that affect children’s lives.

In designing the cornerstone course, I decided to include many of the learning goals of the CCS certificate. The course gives students the opportunity to explore a wide range of issues facing children in the 21st century, and to examine a subset of substantive questions with a research focus.

The course gives students the opportunity to explore a wide range of issues facing children in the 21st century, and to examine a subset of substantive questions with a research focus.

Characteristics of the course

- Interdisciplinary. Throughout the course, students are exposed to theoretical approaches and methods used by different disciplines to study childhood issues. Students should come to understand how different disciplines may frame questions about childhood and develop their own methods for systematically addressing these questions. The course begins with a review of historical and demographic analyses, to help convey how the definition of childhood varies over time and place. The review of the social and policy contexts of childhood draws on materials from history, sociology, psychology, economics, neuroscience, investigative journalism, anthropology, and public policy. The course materials come from many sources and in a variety of formats, including archived audio and video.
- International reference. Through most of the course, I have sought to include studies that inform our understanding of differences across countries and regions in their social and policy environments and how they influence children. For example, we look at distinctive trends in youth migration not only in the United States and Western Europe, but also at youth displacements and their consequences within the world’s poorer regions.
- Enrollments. Many different kinds of students enroll in the course, and this diversity ends up defining it. Typically, there are approximately equal numbers of underclassmen and upperclassmen, and while the largest group of students is from public policy and the social sciences, a wide range of majors is represented, including the sciences (biology, chemistry, and physics). This aspect of the course has been very rewarding for me—I am always impressed by the quality of the students’ research papers and the variety of topics that they address. Students also benefit from the multitude of perspectives that students bring to class discussions.

continued on next page
New developments

The course has evolved in several ways over the five semesters that I have taught it.

- More of a seminar format with increased emphasis on class discussion (despite larger class size).
- Increased attention to linking research/scholarly work on child issues to policy and practice.

The biggest innovation was to add a research/service learning (RSL) component to the course. This was made possible when the Hart Leadership Program proposed that this course become an RSL gateway course, which meant adding the option for students to engage in service learning, while continuing to meet the CCS course and certificate requirements of designing and completing an in-depth empirical research project. (All students in the course are offered the option to participate in RSL, but it is not a requirement.) The idea of the RSL option is that, by working with local community partners, students will gain a deeper understanding of the real-world issues that they address in their research. Furthermore, the research process of inquiry and analysis, as well as the findings, become important elements of the service that students can provide to the community. The current semester is only the second time that RSL has been an option for this course; the first time was very rewarding for the students who participated and for me as well. When students brought elements of their RSL experiences to class discussions, it enriched the class. For students who go on to complete the CCS certificate or other programs of study that involve rigorous empirical research, the RSL experience will help them to engage in research that will make a contribution to knowledge as well as to practice.
Fall 2009 Courses

Title: **Children in Contemporary Society** (CCS 150/PubPol 124)  
Instructor: Clara Muschkin, Assistant Research Professor of Public Policy

What does it mean to be a child in the 21st century? Using an interdisciplinary approach, this course provides an overview of issues facing today’s youth, from childhood through adolescence. We explore social forces that shape the definition of childhood across place and time and review how different disciplines study children. We then consider the many social contexts of childhood, including the family, schools, the economy, the media, and the dynamics of race and gender. One of the objectives of this course is to gain an understanding of issues of childhood adversity—including poverty, violence, delinquency, and health inequities—and how some public policies are addressing these issues. This fall students will have the opportunity to participate in a research/service learning component, coordinated by the Hart Leadership Program. This course is required for students working on the Children in Contemporary Society certificate.

Title: **CCS Research Seminar/Independent Study** (CCS 190S)  
Instructor: varies

This course, which is required for students working on the Children in Contemporary Society certificate, provides them with the opportunity to complete original research on a specific project with a faculty mentor. Their work culminates in a scholarly written project.

Title: **Making Social Policy** (CCS 264S/PubPol 264S/Soc 299S)  
Instructor: Jenni Owen, Associate Director for Policy and Translation and Director of Policy Initiatives

Looking at a range of social policy issues, this course focuses on 1) the policymaking process; 2) the role of different sectors in policymaking (public, non-profit, etc.); 3) when and why policymakers use research—and when and why they don’t; and 4) communicating with policymakers. The course exposes students to current social policy challenges stemming from health and human services, education, and other domains. The course includes visits from policymakers and visits to policymaking “events;” student work that combines policy and research considerations; and the potential for students to contribute usable insights to policymakers and others. Students learn about the value of research in informing policy and the constraints within which policymaking occurs.

Title: **Crime and Public Policy** (PubPol 195/PolSci 199A/Soc 198)  
Instructor: Joel Rosch, Senior Research Scholar and Policy Liaison

In this course, which is about the politics of crime and justice, we examine controversies about the nature of crime, how institutions such as the police, the courts, and corrections are organized, and how crime impacts various aspects of American life. In addition, we look at what research tells us about how we might improve the public institutions we create to deal with the problem of crime. The instructor is especially interested in how crime is understood; how that understanding of crime influences the way crime emerges as a public issue; and how crime is used by different groups for different purposes. As seen by the number of television programs focusing on issues related to crime, and the attention given to high visibility criminal cases, the issues surrounding crime are a useful way to engage issues such as equality, racism, the nature of public goods, symbolic politics, and why it matters how we organize public services.
The Children’s Environmental Health Initiative Launches the First Annual “Bringing Books to Children” Project

By Martha H. Keating

In March, the Children’s Environmental Health Initiative (CEHI) partnered with the Bring Me a Book Foundation, Cisco Systems, and Head Start to purchase and deliver books and bookcase libraries to each Head Start classroom in Durham. Center faculty member Marie Lynn Miranda, associate professor in Duke University’s Nicholas School of the Environment and Department of Pediatrics, is the founding director of CEHI.

The motivation for Bringing Books to Children sprung from CEHI’s community outreach experiences in Durham where members observed a lack of age-appropriate print material for children in homes. Research has documented the link between the number of books in the home and a love of reading, academic success, and IQ.

Initial funding in the amount of $5,000 was provided by the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation. Cisco Systems pledged an additional $10,000 if CEHI could raise matching funds. In a period of a few short weeks, with 100 percent of CEHI staff participating, the matching funds were not only raised, but exceeded.

On a rainy Sunday, 50 volunteers wrapped each of 1,500 books in protective covers, added a nameplate, and packed book bags with three books for each of 459 Durham Head Start children to enjoy at home. Cisco Systems added bookcase libraries in each of 27 Head Start classrooms. CEHI hopes to repeat this successful and rewarding effort in 2010!
Researchers and staff of the Center for Child and Family Policy have been working with members of the Durham community to help plan a replication of the Harlem Children’s Zone in a 120-block area east of downtown Durham. The East Durham Children’s Initiative (EDCI) intends to create a sustained channel of services and support from the cradle to career for children living in this area, in hopes that these children graduate from high school and have access to college and eventual successful entry into the workforce. Members of CCFP are providing informal guidance for the project and its evaluation, as well as assistance with grant proposal development.

The Harlem Children’s Zone (HCZ) is a nonprofit organization that began in 1997 under the leadership of Geoffrey Canada. Canada has received national recognition for his efforts to reform education and advocate for disadvantaged children and families. Canada’s initial vision for HCZ was to create a continuum of programs, concentrated around a 24-block area of the city, to promote the development of children from birth through college. More than a decade later, HCZ has expanded to include nearly 100 city blocks and offers a comprehensive array of programs designed to ensure that children experience positive and supportive social environments both in and out of school. HCZ provides best practice programming specific to early childhood education, primary and secondary school, college, and the community.

The HCZ early childhood programs include a nine-week parenting program for parents of children ages 0-3 called Baby College. It also offers the Harlem Gems, a full-day kindergarten readiness program, and operates two Promise Academy charter schools that provide both an extended day and an extended school-year schedule. In addition, HCZ offers after-school programs and a College Success program to assist high school graduates in applying to colleges. Community programs include a community pride initiative, family services, and health initiatives.

Recent preliminary research conducted by Harvard economists Roland Fryer and Will Dobbie (2009) suggests that HCZ’s comprehensive approach of combining high quality education and community investment is making progress toward closing the achievement gap between black and white children. Fryer and Dobbie compared HCZ Promise Academy students’ test results from the 4th through the 8th grade against black and white students citywide. They found that, by middle school, the effects of HCZ were enough to reverse the black-white achievement gap in math and to reduce it in English language arts.

Having been inspired by the success of the HCZ, members of the Durham community, county government, the public schools, human service agencies, Duke Medical Community Health, CCFP, and other community-based organizations and advocates recently formed a steering committee to develop the East Durham Children’s Initiative. Subcommittees for this initiative are focusing on identifying existing programs in the targeted area, as well as researching evidence-based programs that could be implemented as part of the EDCI. The newly-opened Holton Resource Center will serve as the hub for all programs and activities. In addition, the three schools in the EDCI area—Y.E. Smith Elementary, Neal Middle School, and Southern High School—will be the focal point for elementary, secondary, after-school, and summer programming.

Members of the EDCI group, including CCFP Research Scientist Liz Snyder, recently traveled to New York to participate in a two-and-a-half-day “Practitioner’s Institute” in order to gain more knowledge about the HCZ programs. The Institute included a session led by Geoffrey Canada, who discussed the HCZ mission, philosophy, and programs. Members also became more familiar with Baby College, the Promise Academy charter schools and Community Pride, as well as how to implement, manage,
and evaluate the programs. The group was also able to observe the Harlem Gems program in action. Members came back energized and motivated to move the East Durham Children’s Initiative forward.

This work will be the foundation that allows Durham to be a competitive applicant for the Promise Neighborhood planning grants to be released by the Obama administration in 2010. This initiative will create 20 Promise Neighborhoods in areas that have high levels of poverty and crime and low levels of student academic achievement in cities across the nation. The Promise Neighborhoods will be modeled after the HCZ. It is important to note, however, that the EDCI is looking at other funding possibilities as well in order to ensure that this initiative will continue to move forward. CCFP members will assist in the EDCI planning efforts, not only in these grant writing opportunities but also in helping to plan and implement a comprehensive evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the EDCI programs. County Commissioner Ellen Reckhow called the effort “another example of a positive collaboration between the Durham community and the Center for Child and Family Policy.”

For more information on the EDCI, please contact:
Liz Snyder at liz.snyder@duke.edu
Nicole Lawrence at nicole.lawrence@duke.edu

For more information on the Harlem Children’s Zone, please visit: www.hcz.org

EDCI group with Geoffrey Canada

From left to right: Pat Harris (Welcome Baby), Melva Henry (Durham Housing Authority), Liz Snyder (CCFP), Michelle Lyn (Duke Medical Community Health), Dan Kimberg (Director, Student U), Barker French (Durham At-Risk Youth Collaborative), Geoffrey Canada (HCZ President and CEO), Minnie Forte-Brown (Chair, Durham Public Schools Board of Education).
Child abuse and neglect is a serious problem in the United States. From 2004 to 2005 the number of substantiated reports of maltreatment increased from 872,000 cases to 899,000. The latest report by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services highlights 2006 data that indicate another increase of about 6,000 cases, to 905,000. This equals a rate of 12.1 abuse and neglect victims per 1,000 children (National Center on Child Abuse and Prevention, 2007).

North Carolina is one of a growing number of states implementing new and innovative strategies to improve the child welfare system. The North Carolina Division of Social Services is currently putting two initiatives into action—the Multiple Response System (MRS) and System of Care (SOC). This policy brief focuses on the ways in which these two initiatives work in tandem to support common goals. The brief also offers recommendations and resources that policymakers and practitioners may find useful in their efforts to develop similar initiatives or to improve current practices in the child welfare system.

Analysis of data collected by the Center for Child and Family Policy finds that implementing MRS and SOC simultaneously not only enhanced the implementation of MRS, but also provided positive outcomes for children, families, and communities.

Of the 10 pilot counties involved in the MRS evaluation, three also were involved in the concurrent SOC evaluation. Comparisons of the data collected in the MRS evaluation showed enhanced outcomes in the SOC counties in several important areas:

- Child and Family Team meetings,
- Community collaboration, and
- Reducing duplication of services, effort and time.

The complete policy brief is available on the CCFP webpage: [http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/news/PolicyBrief_mrssoc.pdf](http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/news/PolicyBrief_mrssoc.pdf)

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**The School Research Partnership Office**

*by Jenni Owen and David Rabiner*

Duke University’s collaboration with the Durham Public Schools (DPS) and other districts takes many forms and encompasses a number of departments and programs. These projects broaden and deepen the university’s relationship with the community, provide outreach opportunities for Duke students and faculty, advance scholarly and educational missions, and lead to better outcomes for young people in Durham.

For years, Duke researchers enjoyed a cooperative relationship with the Durham Public Schools that facilitated the successful completion of studies exploring important issues related to children’s academic and social development. Several years ago, however, as pressures on public schools to demonstrate gains in end-of-grade test scores increased, research access became nearly impossible to obtain.

In response to this problem, the Duke School Research Partnership Office (SRP) was established in 2006 with support from the office of the Provost and the Center for Child and Family Policy. The mission of SRP is to coordinate placement of research by Duke faculty and graduate students in area schools and to promote effective research collaborations. Jenni Owen and David Rabiner currently head the office and work with an advisory board that includes Steve Asher (Psychology and Neuroscience), Ken Dodge (Center for Child and Family Policy), Gavan Fitzsimons (Fuqua School), Marie Lynn Miranda (Nicholas School), Karen Wells (Psychiatry), Phail Wynn (Durham and Regional Affairs) and Susan Wynn (Program in Education). Since the establishment of SRP, research access to the Durham Public Schools has improved substantially.

For faculty and graduate students seeking approval to place a study in the local schools, SRP can help in a number of ways, including:

- Providing information about research protocols for area public schools (and nonpublic and other schools with which the SRP Office works); details available at [http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/schoolresearch/SRP_Manual_9-09.pdf](http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/schoolresearch/SRP_Manual_9-09.pdf)
- Consulting on the best way to present research projects to schools to increase the likelihood that the proposal will be supported;
- Helping identify schools that will host a study after it has been approved by the school system;

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Providing funds that can be used by Duke researchers to support collaborative projects with school staff. SRP also strives to undertake efforts that provide benefits to DPS and other school systems that host Duke research. These efforts include:

- Holding an annual half-day research conference to present and discuss research findings of interest to school representatives and Duke researchers;
- Providing school districts with an annual summary of research projects and findings;
- Identifying experts among Duke faculty and researchers to provide consultation to schools and school districts upon request.

This fall, SRP is working on several initiatives to expand and enhance the relationship between Duke and Durham Public Schools. One initiative already underway has five undergraduates working with principals at E.K. Powe and Forest View Elementary Schools to help them address key issues at their school, e.g., increasing school involvement among low-income parents. Another student is consulting with members of the Durham School Board. This is providing students with valuable experience researching issues of immediate importance to principals and teachers while offering local schools a new mechanism to benefit from collaborations with Duke. Students are conducting this work as part of an independent study project, and plans to expand this model into a regular course are now being considered.

A related program would enlist graduate students and faculty to address issues of particular interest to the DPS superintendent and his lead administrative staff. For example, a key priority for DPS is to increase parental involvement in the schools. Duke researchers could assist in this effort by identifying evidence-based programs for involving parents in the schools, gathering data on what is being done locally, and working with DPS staff to develop, implement, and evaluate a program tailored to the needs of DPS.

These projects broaden and deepen the university’s relationship with the community, provide outreach opportunities for Duke students and faculty, advance scholarly and educational missions, and lead to better outcomes for young people in Durham.

The SRP office welcomes other ideas for strengthening the collaboration between Duke faculty and local school systems. For more information please contact Jenni Owen at jwowen@duke.edu or David Rabiner at drabiner@duke.edu.
In July, the Spencer Foundation has renewed its support of the N.C. Education Research Data Center (NCERDC) with a two-year grant. Kenneth Dodge is principal investigator, and Clara Muschkin is co-PI and NCERDC director. The project is entitled “Longitudinal Data for Education Reform: A Critical Role for the NCERDC.”

The NCERDC was created in 2001 with financial support from the Spencer Foundation; this support was renewed in 2003 with an additional four years of funding. The Foundation renewed its commitment to assisting the NCERDC in its mission: facilitating cutting-edge research that is highly relevant to education reform policy by providing researchers across academic disciplines and across universities with access to rich data on students, schools, and teachers. The N.C. Department of Public Instruction collects this information through its accountability programs; the N.C. Education Research Data Center cleans, stores and manages the data in a way that ensures confidentiality and provides user-friendly formats and documentation. This highly productive collaboration has inspired a wealth of research.

Since its inception, the NCERDC has been involved in approximately 70 faculty research projects and 50 doctoral research projects. Each year, it receives more than 60 new research inquiries from faculty and students from across the United States. Scholars have disseminated results in professional conferences, academic journals, policy briefs, and reports on topics that include the minority achievement gap, attracting and retaining qualified teachers, school accountability, effectiveness of charter schools, the academic performance of at-risk children, problem behavior in schools, the impact of new middle and high school programs on student achievement, the effectiveness of programs for gifted as well as special needs students, and life-course outcomes of educational experiences.

Support Renewed for the N.C. Education Research Data Center
Recent Publications


Recent Presentations


Owen, J.W., & Rosch, J.B. (2009, April). Presentation to faculty, researchers, and staff at Georgia State University’s Andrew Young School of Policy Studies regarding their interest in establishing a child policy center and the relationship between policy and research.


Faculty and Researcher News

The Brookings Institution has awarded CCFP faculty member and Assistant Professor of Public Policy and Economics Elizabeth Ottmans Ananat the Okun-Model Early Career Fellowship in Economic Studies. She is spending the 2009-2010 academic year in residence in Washington, D.C., pursuing her research on the causes and consequences of the intergenerational transmission of poverty and inequality.

Congratulations to Leslie Babinski, research analyst on the National Strategies Evaluation for America’s Promise Alliance and Evaluation of School Based Child and Family Policy Support Teams Initiative, on her new appointment as a research scientist. This appointment was effective July 1.

Anne Fletcher, manager of the resource room for the Sanford School of Public Policy and an affiliate of the Center, attended the annual meeting of the Special Libraries Association (SLA) in Washington, D.C., from June 14-17. Of special interest was the presentation on the preliminary findings of a research report on “Embedded Librarians,” funded by a two-year study grant from the SLA. It describes what they consider the wave of the future of the library and information specialist profession as “embedded librarians” who participate in the research efforts of grant teams and research projects by conducting literature reviews and compiling research and data for the team efforts.

Rick Hoyle, professor of psychology and neuroscience and associate director of the Center, is on sabbatical during the 2009-2010 academic year. During this year, he is focusing on completing a number of projects already in the works. These include the edited Handbook of Structural Equation Modeling, two authored books, and a number of empirical research papers to be submitted for publication. During his sabbatical, he will continue work in the NIDA-funded Transdisciplinary Prevention Research Center (TPRC).

Sulzberger Family and Dan Levitan Social Policy Graduate Research Fellowships

The Center for Child and Family Policy selected five doctoral students as graduate research fellows for 2009-2010. The fellowships encourage the career development of promising students who are interested in academic careers that blend basic social science with public policy.

The Sulzberger/Levitan Social Policy Graduate Research Fellows are:

- Lane Destro, Department of Sociology
- Hye-Jin Park, Sanford School of Public Policy
- Sara Pilzer, Sanford School of Public Policy
- Heather Rackin, Department of Sociology
- Andrea Young, Department of Psychology and Neuroscience

“Our center is committed to involving Duke students in the scholarly research it conducts,” said Kenneth A. Dodge, director of the Center for Child and Family Policy. “These excellent students bring a high level of energy, innovation and life experience to bear on important problems facing today’s children and families. We’re glad to have them as a part of the center’s team.”

The fellows form a research mentoring arrangement with a Center faculty member, attend seminars led by guest scholars that address emerging issues in social science approaches to policy translation, complete a research paper or policy brief, and produce a three-page policy brief.

These fellowships are made possible through generous donations by the Sulzberger family, who have made significant contributions to society through publishing The New York Times and are now contributing to the development of outstanding scholars in child and family policy, and by Dan Levitan, a 1979 Duke graduate and co-founder of Maveron, a Washington State-based venture capital firm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu
MISSION
Bridging the gap between research and public policy to improve the lives of children and families.

VISION
The Center for Child and Family Policy is working to solve problems facing children in contemporary society by bringing together scholars from various disciplines with policy makers and practitioners, in an effort to improve the lives of children and families. We are dedicated to teaching, research and policy engagement and focused on the areas of early childhood education, education policy and adolescent problem behavior.