Duke Professor William “Sandy” Darity brings his expertise in public policy, economics, African, and African-American studies to bear on examining disparities between ethnically or racially defined groups, particularly the stark racial achievement gap between white and black students.

Darity became aware of these kinds of dramatic differences in income and education while growing up in Lebanon and Egypt, often accompanying his father on trips related to his father’s work with the World Health Organization’s malaria eradication program. And during visits with his grandmother in Wilson, North Carolina, Darity was struck by how the railroad track split the town in two, based on race: “Wilson did have a fairly substantial black middle class but it was also clear that there were proportionately a lot more black folks who were poor than there were white folks. So I tried to think about that.”

As part of his ongoing exploration of factors contributing to the education achievement gap between white students and African-American students, he was asked in 2000 to lead a team engaged in the assessment of racial and ethnic differences in students’ participation in the more challenging curricula offered by the state’s public schools. And what he found has led both Darity and the curriculum developer for Project Bright IDEA, Margaret Gayle, to make what might seem at first blush to be a dramatic recommendation: Every student should be treated as gifted.

As Darity explained during a recent appearance on Duke’s “Office Hours” program, “To the extent that we treat students as gifted selectively, we actually partition the quality of curriculum and instruction that kids get exposed to, and we disproportionately locate black and

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Dear Colleagues:

At the core of our Center’s mission is the aim to improve the lives of children and families. We do that most effectively when we partner with other researchers from across campus, across town, or around the world, or when we connect with community agencies here in Durham that can actualize our research findings. Collaboration leverages the skills of each partner, allowing the reach of a particular program or intervention to go further, positively impacting families who are increasingly being asked to do more with less.

In this issue of Bridge, we are celebrating some of the vibrant and powerful partnerships Center researchers and faculty fellows enjoy. We note the progress of Project Bright IDEA, a gifted-level curriculum designed for delivery to all students. Professor William “Sandy” Darity, one of our faculty fellows, conducted research on high-achieving minority students that inspired the curriculum that has been developed and implemented by Margaret Gayle. Their combined efforts have resulted in a growing number of districts adopting the curriculum in North Carolina and, increasingly, around the country.

We also share some of the findings and policy recommendations that emerged from the latest Family Impact Seminar addressing childhood obesity. Researchers, legislators, legislative staff members, policymakers, educators, and representatives from community agencies and child care centers came together and agreed to “take action” in response to the alarming rates of childhood obesity here in North Carolina. In particular, they highlighted the positive impact that partnerships between child care centers and local farms and gardens can have on improving health and nutrition.

And in a new section of the Bridge, Spotlight on the Community, we feature a Q&A with Robert Murphy, executive director of the Center for Child and Family Health (CCFH) in Durham. He shares a look back at the history of partnership between our Center and CCFH, and he looks ahead to several communitywide initiatives involving both organizations that are designed to benefit children and families here in Durham.

We extend congratulations to Jenni Owen, the Center’s director of policy initiatives, on her official appointment as lecturer at the Sanford School of Public Policy.

We also are pleased to welcome Professor Desiree Murray to our Center. She is a leading scholar of children’s attention deficits, including school-based services for students with ADHD, parent education to increase access to care, and improvements in teacher training.

We continue to be inspired and encouraged by the wide variety of engagement opportunities that we are afforded — whether it be town and gown, researchers and policymakers, or community agencies and evaluators. Combining forces and leveraging our unique capacities, we can positively shift the trajectory for a number of children and their families.

We invite you to learn more about our Center’s projects and publications, as well as those of our partners. And we are mindful that our ability to collaborate in so many ways over the past 13 years has been due, in large part, to the generosity of individuals, foundations, and funding agencies. We are grateful for their support and for the ongoing contributions of researchers, faculty, students, and staff members as we continue to identify ways we can make a difference in the lives of children and their families.

Kenneth A. Dodge
Director, Center for Child and Family Policy
William McDougall Professor of Public Policy and Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience
Bringing A Gifted Curriculum to All Students

Continued from page 1

Latino kids in those environments where they get the dumbed down instruction.” So Darity is advocating that schools provide all students with what North Carolina currently defines as a “gifted curriculum.” In addition, he recommends that the strategies for reaching students be improved, the material be more demanding, and teacher training be retooled.

His research findings have demonstrated that when all students are provided a gifted education, all groups show an increase in academic performance. “So the general principle is that if you upgrade or accelerate curriculum for all students, you get positive results for all students,” he said during the broadcast. “And, in fact, universalizing a high-quality curriculum actually reduces the magnitude of the racial achievement gap.”

Project Bright IDEA requires teachers to participate in training designed to reduce their inherent biases around what a student may be capable of achieving based on the student’s income, his or her parents’ educational background, the student’s ethnicity or race, or other factors.

The curriculum also raises teachers’ expectations for all students, while at the same time elevating each student’s expectation of what he or she can accomplish. It also emphasizes critical thinking skills and behaviors like persistence that have been proven to enhance academic performance.

But what about those who ask, “How can you make up for the fact that some kids were raised without any books in the home? Or some had less parental involvement in school?” In answer, Darity references results from a study he conducted just down the road from Duke.

He cites data from the 1999-2000 fifth-grade class at Durham’s Southwest Elementary School which indicated that 41 percent of black students did not pass the state’s reading test as compared to 12 percent of white students; and 23 percent of black students did not pass the state’s math test, as compared to 9 percent of white students. Darity recounts how a new principal joined the school and championed expanding participation in its gifted program. Within three years, the percentage of black and white students combined who didn’t pass the reading test was down to 10 percent and only 3 percent of black and white students combined failed the math test. During this same period, the school was experiencing a sharp increase in the percentage of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, spiking from 30 percent to 47 percent.

“The transformation of classroom instruction overrides the economic disadvantages that kids have because they come from poorer families. So when you move to these higher levels of instruction for all children, you get these gains, regardless of whether or not the kids are from poor families. So this would suggest that the core of the racial achievement gap lies in what occurs at the schools. I know this flies in the face of what many people say... it’s not irrelevant — what happens in the home — but it is not as important.”

Amidst the din of the alarm bells being sounded about the crisis in 21st-century education practices, Professor Darity continues sharing his research findings and the positive outcomes from Project Bright IDEA, while Gayle manages the teacher training aspect and helps schools replicate the entire program, or key elements of it, in additional districts. Recently, educators traveled from Wisconsin, Virginia, and South Carolina to see the program in operation. Once a pilot project, the full curriculum is now operational in six different districts and it has a new name: Bright Tomorrow.

Meanwhile, Darity continues his other research, analyzing the causes behind the striking employment disparities between blacks and whites in the current economy, and his work with University of North Carolina professor Karolyn Tyson, exploring attitudes among black and white high school students toward participation in accelerated classes.

When asked if he feels hopeful about the potential for change in gifted education, Darity reflects on the evolution of Project Bright IDEA, remembering that he and his research team first presented results to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction’s Gifted Division back in 2001, highlighting the low numbers of students of color participating in gifted programs. “Even though I wasn’t directly involved in the design of Project Bright IDEA, they made use of the report as a basis for the development of the program. And so I can say ‘Well, ten years ago, Project Bright IDEA didn’t exist. And now it exists and there is some evidence of its effect and its strength.’ So I guess I would be optimistic…. There is an old phrase about pushing against the mountain. Almost anything I’m for is pushing against the mountain, so I just keep pushing against the mountain.” He laughs heartily but shows no signs of slowing down or changing course. “You know, it may not happen in my lifetime but you keep trying to pursue it.”

Suzanne Valdivia is the Center’s communications specialist.
Cross-Cultural Collaboration Yields Unexpected Adventures and Benefits  

by Suzanne Valdivia

Winding through the narrow alleyways of old Beijing in a rickshaw on a rainy morning, Project Manager Ann Skinner (Center for Child and Family Policy) lost sight of the guide traveling in the rickshaw ahead. Skinner recounts with a bemused expression, “I realized I couldn’t see Jackie, and then it dawned on me that I could be on my own in the middle of Beijing – speaking no Chinese.” Fortunately, the guide’s rickshaw reappeared and they eventually wended their way to their destination: the home of a grandfather who was living in the heart of the city. He shared his collection of family photos, giving Skinner a close and personal look at life in Beijing over seven decades.

Skinner, Center Director Ken Dodge, and Principal Investigator and Associate Research Professor Jennifer Lansford were in Beijing this past spring, meeting with their collaborators from nine countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North and South America. They shared data and strategized about additional projects and papers that have emerged out of their five-year project, Parenting Across Cultures, which looks at how parent behavior, including discipline strategies, affects child adjustment.

The global reach of the Parenting Across Cultures project is unique. Typical cross-cultural studies might provide data from just two or three countries. This project looks at 13 different cultural groups in nine countries. What is driving the geographic breadth is the understanding that cultural context impacts attitudes and behaviors in families. In addition, researchers in the field have recognized that, historically, studies have focused narrowly on Western industrialized nations. Skinner explains, “Research in most psychology journals consists almost entirely of studies with research subjects from Western industrialized nations. We know that these subjects are not representative of the diversity of the world’s population, and that is problematic because parenting constructs like moral reasoning and self-concept differ across cultures. I’d like to think that we are doing our part to change this.”

Collaborating across borders has its challenges but, through email and Skype, the researchers are able to cover most of the day-to-day issues involving data collection and survey translation. Skinner says that the annual meetings are critical for ironing out more complex issues, and for gathering in smaller teams to explore related projects and coordinate submission of articles to various publications. The collaborators are extremely productive when they do meet face-to-face because they know their time together is so limited. They agreed at the project’s outset to communicate and publish primarily in English, but participants are free to publish articles in their native language journals as well.

Skinner is grateful for the ways in which this collaboration has brought her into contact with a diverse and talented
Youth, Crime and Public Policy  
(CCS 49S/PubPol 49S)

Instructor:  
Joel Rosch, Senior Research Scholar

This first-year seminar is for students who are interested in learning more about public policies dealing with crimes committed by young people. This course uses the subject of crime to introduce students to the variety of issues involved in child and family policy. Students will be introduced to juvenile crime, the criminal justice system, how public policy is made, what different kinds of research tell us about juvenile crime, and the role of research in the policymaking process. The course also explores: 1) how juvenile crime policy is impacted by different kinds of societal values; 2) how the nature and “causes” of criminal behaviors are understood; and 3) the kinds of resources and technologies different societies have at their disposal.

Making Social Policy  
(CCS 270S/PubPol 234S/Soc 234S)

Instructor:  
Jenni Owen, Lecturer, 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. Readings include research, policy and practice articles, and analyses from multiple disciplines. Experiential and written exercises help students develop skills for using research to inform policy and practice. 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 useful insights to policymakers and others. Students learn about the value of research in informing policy and the constraints within which policymaking occurs. They complete independent and group assignments that combine their knowledge from the readings with their observations of live policy events.

Children in Contemporary Society  
(CCS 150/PubPol 124)

Instructor:  
Clara Muschkin, Assistant Research Professor of Public Policy Studies; Director of the Children in Contemporary Society Certificate Program

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. It begins with an exploration of social forces that shape the definition of childhood across place and time and a review of how different disciplines study children. The course also examines 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. In fall 2011, students have the opportunity to participate in a research service learning component coordinated by the Hart Leadership Program. Participation in the service learning component is optional. This course is required for students working on the Children in Contemporary Society certificate.

Suzanne Valdivia is the Center’s communications specialist.
James Kvaal, deputy under secretary at the U.S. Department of Education, kicked off the 2011-2012 Sulzberger Distinguished Lecture Series on September 20, outlining steps to increase college completion rates. The talk, entitled “Meeting the President’s 2020 College Completion Goal: A National Strategy for Competitiveness and Success,” was sponsored by the Center for Child and Family Policy with funding from the Arthur Sulzberger Family.

According to Kvaal, the United States has built a system of mass higher education that provides a broad segment of the population access to higher education but lacks emphasis on ensuring that those students graduate. Kvaal told the audience that the U.S. has made great strides in making college more accessible, noting that the college-going rate among high school seniors has increased nearly 50 percent over the last 40 years. The country has also made a large investment in scholarships and college tax credits, driving down the net price of a college education. But Kvaal said an additional strategy is needed — and that is to help college students complete their education. “What we haven’t focused on is helping them once they get there, helping them get across the finish line once they show up on our campuses,” he said.

Once a world leader in college attainment rates, today the U.S. sees only about 40 percent of 25- to 34-year olds earn a college degree — the same as a generation ago. Almost every other industrialized nation has seen an increase in its college attainment rates during that time, except for the U.S. and Germany. Most U.S. students who start college never finish. Nearly one-third of students at private and public four-year colleges and two-thirds of community college students fail to earn a degree within six years.

To address the challenge, Kvaal advocated that colleges recognize that students’ needs have changed. Almost 75 percent of students are what were once termed “non-traditional” students, meaning they delayed entry into college, have at least one dependent, and/or work part- or full-time. These students would benefit from structured programs that offer courses on a schedule that is organized and optimized to help them earn a degree as quickly as possible. Open, online curricula offering a “learn anytime/anywhere” structure would also benefit these students, Kvaal said, as long as the programs are of high quality.

Kvaal also suggested that community colleges and state universities simplify and coordinate transfer and alignment processes and that high schools and colleges align graduation requirements with college entrance requirements. Too many high school graduates, he said, find that they are not prepared for college-level courses.

Work is also needed, Kvaal maintained, to standardize prior learning assessments so that those entering college from a career path can more easily attain college credit for previous work experience.

Although the reasons for college noncompletion vary, overwhelmingly it comes down to money, Kvaal said. Emergency scholarship funds that help individual students through a short-term financial crisis could be one effective tool to keep students in college and on track to earn a degree.

Kvaal’s lecture was the first in the 2011-12 Sulzberger Distinguished Lecture Series. On October 18, Ronald F. Ferguson, senior lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, presented “Educational Excellence with Equity: A Social Movement for the 21st Century.” The third Sulzberger lecture will feature Maria Cancian, professor of public affairs and social work at La Follette School of Public Affairs, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her talk, entitled “Complex Relationships: Family structure and public policy,” is slated for April 18, 2012.

The events are free and open to the public. For more information or to register, call (919) 613-9350, e-mail ehlayko@duke.edu, or visit www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu."
CCS Certificate Recipient Sarah Safley: At the Intersection of Education, Environmental Science and Policy  by Suzanne Valdivia

On a summer morning at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences in Raleigh, a passel of children are scrambling through the door of the Discovery Room, heading to the various exhibits and nature objects that are just waiting to be encountered: a turtle shell, a life-size model of a hollow tree, a giant piece of coral. A few minutes pass and Sarah Safley, a recent environmental science and policy graduate, is smiling reassuringly, holding onto one end of a long, red, stretchy tube of fabric, while a curly-haired 3-year-old girl examines the other end of the sleeve, trying to figure out whether pinecones, seashells, or rocks are making the jangling sound inside.

Along the wall, a boy is staring into the mirror, dressed from head to toe in an opossum costume. Another visitor holds a bird’s nest out for his grandmother to see the two robin eggs inside. “This is a hands-on room,” Safley says, and it’s for children and families in particular. I’m interested in environmental education, getting kids more involved in the environment. So for my independent study I wanted to look at non-formal education — how we can get kids more involved in nature through non-formal means.”

At the end of her sophomore year, Safley learned about CCS 150, the cornerstone course for the Children in Contemporary Society (CCS) certificate, and it piqued her interest. So, in addition to pursuing a major in environmental science and policy, she enrolled in the CCS certificate program, sampling electives in education and sociology. As part of an Educational Psychology class, she volunteered as a literacy tutor for fourth graders at E.K. Powe Elementary School in Durham.

Through the certificate’s required independent study, Safley aptly combined her interests in non-formal education and early childhood learning, using the research design she developed in the Social Science Policy Research course to explore the demographics of the Discovery Room and the patterns of parent-child interaction, to track the movement of different participants, and to assess the popularity of each exhibit.

Safley has been able to make a unique contribution to the museum by sharing the results of her research with the other docents at their monthly meeting. “We talked about how my results actually showed that all of the room was being evenly used. And just about every single exhibit was listed as somebody’s favorite.” The bees have been a big draw, she explained, motioning to the yellow caution tape that was hanging where an observation hive of bees had been encased in acrylic a few weeks before. Discovery Room Curator Anthony Hinton assured some of the visitors not to worry – the bees would be back.

From the bee enclosure to the puppets, from the microscopes to the wall of ocean objects, Safley showed her fellow docents how she had traced visitors’ paths around the entire room. Her map, to the untrained eye, looks like a bunch of manic doodles. But Safley used this approach to assess where visitors spent time in the room, while also indicating which exhibits children explored alone and which drew interaction from parents/caregivers. In addition, she reported responses from 683 surveys she collected from Discovery Room visitors, asking them to list their three favorite exhibits. “Then I coded the responses to determine which characteristics of the exhibits they liked the most.”

Safley forged her own path as an undergraduate, finding unique ways to combine classes in her major and those in the certificate. “My independent study got me more interested in looking at this kind of topic — environmental education — in a more scientific way, Safley says, “doing actual research, and gathering data to explore how we can make it better and more effective.” She has blended coursework and community involvement to pursue her passion for engaging children in exploring and understanding nature. And in addition to devoting time to her studies, she managed to carve out time to maintain her role as a volunteer docent in the Discovery Room.

Safley recently started working as an environmental educator for Raleigh Parks and Recreation, developing and presenting educational programs and creating opportunities for children to connect with nature through play. She has been invited to present the results from her independent study at the annual meeting of the North American Association for Environmental Education, an annual conference which attracts over 1,000 environmental educators. ▲

Suzanne Valdivia is the Center’s communications specialist.
The Center for Child and Family Policy selected three doctoral students as graduate research fellows for 2011-12. The fellowships encourage the career development of promising students who are interested in academic careers that blend basic social science with public policy.

This year’s Sulzberger/Levitan Social Policy Graduate Research Fellows are Anya Drabkin, Maeve Gearing, and Alissa Wigdor:

**Anya Drabkin** is a fourth-year graduate student in psychology and neuroscience who is mentored by Kathy Sikkema, professor of psychology and neuroscience and psychiatry and behavioral sciences. Anya has worked with youth and families in a variety of settings both domestically and internationally while researching homeless families in Chicago, dating violence among adolescents in Boston, low-income families in Alabama, and the development of peer-education HIV-prevention programs for orphans and other vulnerable children in South Africa. Her current research focuses on the integration of two major areas: 1) how incarceration – of parents, siblings, older peers, and other community members – affects the psychology and behavior of children and adolescents; and 2) the interplay between mental health and HIV-related risk behavior among youth.

**Maeve Gearing** is in her second year as a Sulzberger/Levitan fellow. She is a fourth-year public policy studies graduate student being mentored by Phil Cook, ITT/Terry Sanford Professor of Public Policy, and Jake Vigdor, professor of public policy and economics. In her work with Dr. Cook, she studies the causes and consequences of elementary school truancy and the political, economic, and social climate around underage drinking, weighing negative consequences of alcohol use with assessment of individual rights. For her dissertation, Maeve is focusing on childhood obesity and its social-psychological causes and consequences.

**Alissa Wigdor,** a third-year child clinical psychology graduate student, is mentored by Martha Putallaz, professor of psychology and neuroscience and director of the Duke Talent Identification Program. Alissa is interested in children’s peer relationships and how these relationships buffer or exacerbate their adjustment outcomes. Her research and clinical goals have been recognized by the National Science Foundation (Honorable Mention for Graduate Research Fellowship) and the Women’s Studies Department at Duke University (Anne McDougall Memorial Award).

This year’s fellows will spend ten hours per week working as research assistants for their mentors on projects of joint interest, in addition to attending Center-sponsored lectures, making a presentation about their research, and participating in meetings to discuss their research and career development – all while making good progress toward their Ph.D.

“Our Center is committed to involving Duke students in the scholarly research it conducts,” said Ken Dodge, director of the Center for Child and Family Policy, “and the students benefit by their involvement in cutting-edge research. We are fortunate to have such well-qualified fellows this year.”

These fellowships are made possible through generous support from the Sulzberger family and Dan Levitan. The Sulzberger family has made significant contributions to society through publishing *The New York Times* and is now contributing to the development of outstanding scholars in child and family policy. Dan Levitan is a 1979 Duke graduate and co-founder of Maveron, a venture capital firm based in Washington State.
Jacqueline Anne Morris Fellows

Jacqueline Anne Morris was the Center’s first undergraduate honors thesis student. She was a rising senior, majoring in psychology and public policy, when she passed away in a car accident in her native Arizona in 2000. Morris’ parents established the Jacqueline Anne Morris Memorial Foundation to support undergraduate students who, like their daughter, are “dynamic, bright, ambitious, and idealistic.”

The foundation endowed the Jacqueline Anne Morris Undergraduate Mentored Social Policy Research on Children, Youth, and Families Fellowship to support students who are interested in conducting research in an area of child and family policy. Each fellow receives $500 to cover research-related expenses.

Congratulations to the students selected as 2011-12 Morris fellows:

- **Andrea Green**, senior: psychology major, minors in French studies and chemistry  
  **Project:** ADHD in College Students  
  **Mentor:** David Rabiner, associate research professor of psychology and neuroscience; associate director for program evaluation services, Center for Child and Family Policy

- **Lauren Hendricks**, senior: public policy studies major, English minor  
  **Project:** Factors Contributing to Disproportionate Rates of IDMI and SED Identification in African-American Students  
  **Mentor:** Jenni Owen, lecturer, Sanford School of Public Policy; director of policy initiatives, Center for Child and Family Policy

- **Sol Bee Jung**, senior: public policy studies major, Asian and Middle Eastern studies minor  
  **Project:** Evaluating the Impact of Evidence-Based Practice in Public Health: A case study on parent-child interaction therapy  
  **Mentor:** Katie Rosanbalm, research scholar, Center for Child and Family Policy

- **Ryan Lipes**, senior: public policy studies major, statistics minor  
  **Project:** Smaller-Themed Learning Communities  
  **Mentor:** David Malone, associate professor of the practice, director of undergraduate studies, and director of Service Learning Program, Program in Education

- **Erica Nagi**, senior: interdepartmental major – Language and Culture of the Arab and Francophone World  
  **Project:** Constructing the Future: The process of street children rehabilitation in Cairo, Egypt – a case study on the Ana el-Masry Organization  
  **Mentor:** Mbaye Lo, assistant professor of the practice, Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

- **Chinmayi Sharma**, sophomore: public policy studies major, English minor, Children in Contemporary Society certificate  
  **Project:** Parent Behavior and Child Adjustment Across Cultures  
  **Mentor:** Jennifer Lansford, associate research professor, Social Science Research Institute

- **Rohan Taneja**, junior: economics and public policy studies majors, political science minor  
  **Project:** The Effect of Teacher Assistants on Student Achievement  
  **Mentor:** Leslie Babinski, research scientist, Center for Child and Family Policy

- **Jenny Wang**, senior: neuroscience major, chemistry minor  
  **Project:** At-Risk Children  
  **Mentor:** Makeba Wilbourn, assistant professor of psychology and neuroscience

- **Stephanie Weiss**, senior: public policy studies major, biology minor, Genome Science and Policy certificate  
  **Project:** Cyber Bullying  
  **Mentor:** Philip Cook, ITT/Terry Sanford Professor of Public Policy
Durham Connects, a nurse home-visiting program for families of newborns in Durham, was initially conceptualized by researchers at the Center for Child and Family Policy in 2007. For the past four years, Durham Connects staff has worked with community partners to establish a comprehensive support network of human services agencies, linking families of newborns to available services. Along the way, they have responded to particular challenges: recruiting enough nurses to staff the program, hiring Spanish-speaking staff to serve the county’s Hispanic population, and finding a simple way to engage all eligible families shortly after birth.

When Durham Connects nurses began providing home visits in 2009 as part of a randomized controlled trial evaluation, the program served half of all babies born to Durham County families. Early results from the program evaluation have been encouraging, suggesting that the program reached a large percentage of eligible families and

Q & A with Robert Murphy, Executive Director of the Center for Child & Family Health

Q: Some people may not know that Duke was one of the founding partners of the Center for Child and Family Health (CCFH), a non-profit mental health services organization located in the NC Mutual Life Building in Durham. Can you share a little more about the history of CCFH?

A: CCFH opened in 1996 as a consortium involving Duke, North Carolina Central University, and UNC-Chapel Hill, with the mission of more effectively serving maltreated children in a multidisciplinary way — a community-based, academically informed manner. In ‘96, the primary focus was really on direct service delivery. Over time, we have achieved more of a balance between our community service side and our more academic side.

Today, CCFH provides a lot of direct service involving efforts to prevent child abuse as well as mental health interventions for traumatized children. We also have trainees from the three universities, typically graduate students from psychology, psychiatry, social work, law, public health, and nursing. And although they may be here doing research, a major draw is the opportunity for them to learn clinical best practices that are not available in many graduate programs.

Q: How did CCFH begin partnering with the Center for Child and Family Policy?

A: Our partnership grew out of a common interest in preventing child abuse and having the opportunity, particularly through the Durham Family Initiative (DFI), to harness the intellect and skill of researchers, providers, trainers, and policy leaders to really see how we can effect change for Durham. Under the leadership of Dr. Ken Dodge, DFI is an effort spanning more than ten years that strives to reduce child maltreatment in Durham. With support from The Duke Endowment, we have witnessed a major drop in child abuse rates in Durham that has exceeded some positive changes that we have seen in other counties. Center for Child and Family Policy researchers who are clinically informed have combined efforts with CCFH practitioners and faculty members who are clinically focused, as well as research informed. It has been a strong partnership since the initiative’s inception a decade ago and continues to be that way.

Q: CCFH is characterized broadly as being a mental health services provider for high-risk families in the Triangle. What are some of the key focus areas of the organization?

A: In terms of mental health, we are focused on and committed to using evidence-based practices in our work with traumatized children. That may sound obvious, yet there is a lag in the mental health field between the time that science shows an approach is effective and the time that it becomes standard practice. This “science to service gap” can be as long as 17 years before an effective practice is widely adopted.

An essential part of our mission is to bring quality of care to traumatized children — many of whom have been abused — and
was administered with high quality and high family satisfaction, while effectively increasing family connections to supportive community resources. Based on these positive evaluation results, the program expanded in January 2011 to provide home visits to all newborns in Durham County.

With the evaluation of the Durham Connects program implementation successfully completed, the program is gradually transitioning from a formal, university-based evaluation model to a sustainable, non-profit, community-based model. To support this evolution, the nursing staff will now be located at the Center for Child and Family Health, a non-profit organization in Durham that has served as a key collaborating partner since the program’s launch. The program is also in the process of training new nurses and has recently expanded the role of non-clinical staff to provide nurse and family support.

From its new base of operations, Durham Connects is now embarking on a new challenge: community sustainability. To date, the program has been funded by The Duke Endowment as part of their 10-year commitment to reducing child maltreatment in the Durham community. This year, Durham County began contributing annual funds to support the program; in addition, grant funding from the Oak Foundation now supports those Durham Connects staff whose work falls under the umbrella of the East Durham Children’s Initiative. The goal now is to further expand corporate and public financial support for Durham Connects to ensure that home visiting services continue for all newborns in Durham County. 

Jeannine Sato is the Program Director for Durham Connects and Ben Goodman is a research scientist at the Center for Child and Family Policy.

Q: Did the Durham Connects nurse home-visiting program, which now serves the families of every baby born in Durham hospitals, grow out of the DFI?

A: Yes. DFI has always focused on both improving healthy infant development and decreasing child abuse rates, effectively preventing child abuse across Durham County.

DFI has gone through three broad phases, moving further and further upstream in terms of prevention. At the beginning, it was very focused on those who were far and away the highest risk families, who often were already involved in the child welfare system. Over time, we really came to feel that to affect the whole community required a shift further upstream. During Phase Two, we were able to conduct a randomized trial of several hundred families that may tell us if we can be equally effective with a more brief, and therefore less costly, version of our CCFH home visit intervention. During our third phase, we have developed and are currently implementing Durham Connects, a universal nurse home-visiting approach that is designed to help new mothers connect to their babies, recognize their needs and strengths, and connect each family to available, high-quality services and supports.

Q: What other community projects is the Center for Child and Family Health involved in?

A: We are involved locally in several projects: a children’s mental health partnership with the Durham Police, integrating mental and physical healthcare in schools, improving care for military families, and training clinicians in other communities to apply our best practices. CCFH has become the lead agency for the East Durham Children’s Initiative (EDCI), a multi-partner, community-wide effort designed to adapt and replicate the Harlem Children’s Zone initiative. The focus is on helping a whole neighborhood of children — about 3,000 children in East Durham — to succeed in school and either go to college or have a career.

Q: How is Duke’s Center for Child and Family Policy involved in EDCI?

A: The Center for Child and Family Policy (CCFP) has been a strong advocate involved in building community support for EDCI, and the faculty at the Center has been committed in helping to secure funding. CCFP researchers Nicole Lawrence and Liz Snyder are the two CCFP psychologists with the task of evaluating EDCI, which is a complex challenge because the EDCI effort involves multiple partners, services, and outcomes.

Q: How would you characterize the state of mental health services for children growing up in Durham?

A: I think we have progressed far and are getting still closer in Durham to having a young child system of care in place that focuses on prevention. With these different programs and with a growing commitment to using programs supported by good science, key community partners, including residents, political leaders, service providers, and others, have made great progress in the last eight or ten years in terms of increasing the overall health of young children and maximizing the opportunities available to them.
Crisis, epidemic, tragedy. These and other grave terms are used to describe the unprecedented increase in childhood obesity in North Carolina and nationally. As the number of overweight and obese children ages 0-5 nears 30 percent in North Carolina, policymakers, health practitioners, and parents are looking for solutions to the burgeoning problem.

The 2011 North Carolina Family Impact Seminar (NCFIS), held at the North Carolina legislature on May 4, highlighted policy and program strategies to combat childhood obesity, with a focus on farm-to-preschool approaches. The key messages shared at the conference included: 1) childhood obesity is preventable; and 2) farm-to-preschool programs are a practical and effective way to begin to address the obesity problem.

Farm-to-preschool initiatives connect local farmers with preschools and help establish healthy eating patterns by increasing the availability of local fresh fruits and vegetables for young children and often for their families as well. Some programs also feature local food and farm-based education by establishing on-site gardens at child care centers, by taking students on farm field trips, or by cooking with locally grown food in the classroom.

Members of the NCFIS legislative advisory committee and other members of the legislature recommended the topic of childhood obesity for this year's seminar, highlighting it as a growing challenge facing North Carolina. Nearly 70 people attended the seminar, including legislators, legislative staff, executive branch officials, child care providers, representatives of other child- and family-serving agencies, researchers, and college students.

Featured presenters included Dr. David Gardner, executive director of the North Carolina Center for Health and Wellness at UNC-Asheville; Emily Jackson, founder and director of the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project’s Growing Minds farm-to-school program and southeast regional lead for the national Farm to School Network; Mary James, farmer/owner of Dogwood Nursery Farms in Pender County; Ronnie W. Pepper, area manager of Western Carolina Community Action Head Start centers; and Dr. Sara Benjamin Neelon, assistant professor of community and family medicine at Duke University Medical Center and the Duke Global Health Institute and a CCFP faculty fellow.

Seminar Highlights

Senator William Purcell, a retired pediatrician representing Anson, Richmond, Scotland, and Stanley counties and a member of the Legislative Task Force on Childhood Obesity, welcomed the attendees. He commended the attendees on their interest in and attention to the childhood obesity problem, emphasizing that it is estimated to cost the state as much as $24 billion per year.

Gardner, director of the North Carolina Center for Health and Wellness at UNC-Asheville, provided an overview of early childhood obesity in North Carolina, which is ranked tenth in the nation for the number of obese adults and eleventh in the number of obese children and teens (ages 10-17). The percentage of children under the age of five in North Carolina who are obese is over 7 percent. Research has shown that overweight children are more likely to face physical, academic, and mental health challenges which, in turn, cost taxpayers millions of dollars.

“It’s time for action,” Gardner told the audience. “We need to take what we’ve learned and what we’ve studied and put it into action in a more effective and meaningful way. And that means no more delays, because delays are simply giving the obesity epidemic time to get a better foothold…. And we need to know that childhood obesity is preventable, and only through action will we be able to say that we have not failed our children.”

Three panelists featured during the seminar led a discussion to help audience members better understand the challenges and rewards of implementing farm-to-preschool programs.

Jackson, with the Farm to School Network, described some of the benefits of the farm/preschool relationship, which include increased demand for local farm produce and healthier eating
options for the children enrolled in child care. She emphasized that programs can start with one locally-grown item and expand over time to embrace a larger variety of local produce.

“The best way to start is with one product and see how that works,” Jackson said. “Pick one that doesn’t take a lot of different types of equipment or cooking know-how, something that could be served fresh.” Jackson also recommended that the state incorporate information about farm-to-preschool initiatives into the training curriculum for registered dieticians and early childhood teachers.

James is a farmer and owner of Dogwood Nursery Farms and a former school/parent liaison coordinator in the Pender County School System. She pointed out that small farmers need to know the state’s rules and regulations so that they can more easily take part in the process of creating farm/preschool relationships. Demonstrating her passion for improving children’s eating habits, she suggested the creation of a television cooking show geared toward young children to teach them about healthy eating habits.

During his 24 years at Head Start in Henderson County, Pepper has created several children’s gardens and outdoor learning environments. He recommended that the state use existing farm-to-preschool sites to educate child care providers about how to start programs in their own communities. He recounted how the Henderson County program had originally started with a small on-site garden that the children planted and tended. Later, the children visited a local farm so that they could see farming on a larger scale. That visit led to an agreement with a local farmer who began supplying produce for the center’s meals. Pepper said that educating other child care leaders about paths to successful farm-to-preschool programs will be instrumental to increasing farm-to-preschool partnerships.

Concluding the seminar with an outline of policy options, Neelon, whose research includes analyses on the success of a child care gardening program, suggested the following state initiatives to promote farm-to-preschool efforts:

- Issue a legislative statement supporting farm-to-preschool efforts,
- Increase cooperation and clarify liability for the state’s farmers and child care providers,
- Enact new licensing and administrative regulations that would enhance nutrition standards and encourage farm-to-preschool partnerships in child care settings, and
- Enhance the Child and Adult Care Food Program standards in North Carolina to improve nutritional quality.

Neelon pointed out that while North Carolina has greatly enhanced physical activity regulations for child care during the past year, the state has enacted few nutrition regulations.

“Child care providers have a lot of latitude in deciding which foods and beverages to serve children, as long as foods are within the general food categories.” She illustrated that statement with a hypothetical example of a child care center serving a lunch of baked chicken, broccoli, peaches, a wheat roll, and fat-free milk with a total of 185 calories. Another center might serve fried chicken, French fries, juice, a white roll, and whole milk for a total of 490 calories. Both meals meet the state regulations, but one meal contains more than twice the calories — calories that could add up to obesity.

“North Carolina, compared to other states, has a lot of room for improvement about specifying the types of healthy foods and beverages we can serve in child care settings,” Neelon concluded.

To access the NCFIS briefing report, Preventing Childhood Obesity: Policy and Practice Strategies for North Carolina, or other supplementary materials, please visit the Center for Child and Family Policy’s web site at http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/engagement/ncfis.php.

Erika Layko is the Center’s meeting and events coordinator.
Jenni Owen is a lecturer in the Sanford School of Public Policy and director of policy initiatives for the Center.

1 F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America’s Future 2010, Trust for America’s Health
Center Director Presents Findings at Congressional Hearing Focused on Raising Healthy Children

In September 2011, Center Director Ken Dodge participated in a Congressional briefing alongside three other experts in the field of child development. The briefing was sponsored by the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), an interdisciplinary, international organization of scientists that was established in 1933 by the National Academy of Sciences.

SRCD provided the following summary, detailing the proceedings.

September 24, 2011: Emerging evidence from developmental science is helping to chart a course for supporting the positive development of children in the United States. This SRCD-sponsored Congressional briefing presented recent research by leading developmental scientists published in a special issue of the journal Child Development on Raising Healthy Children. Congressman Sandy Levin opened the briefing. His address was followed by welcoming remarks from Martha Zaslow, Director of SRCD’s Office for Policy and Communications.

Presentations at the briefing summarized key research findings on a range of challenges to raising healthy children and provided useful information for those developing programs and policies to address these challenges. Presentations included: Understanding and Preventing Bullying in Schools (Nancy G. Guerra, University of Delaware), Management of Chronic Health Conditions in Children: The Importance of Family Mealtime (Barbara H. Fiese, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), Development of Positive Employment Attitudes and Behaviors among Low-Income Youth (Vonnie C. McLoyd, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), and Preventing Conduct Disorders in Children at High Risk (Kenneth A. Dodge, Duke University).

A number of U.S. Senators and Representatives served as honorary co-chairs of the briefing, including: Senator Robert Casey, Senator Tom Harkin, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro, Congressman Rush Holt, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Congressman Sandy Levin, Congressman Tom Petri, Congressman Dave Reichert, and Congresswoman Linda Sánchez. The event was attended by over 75 people from Congressional offices, federal agencies, and policy and professional organizations.

Judge’s Unprecedented Emphasis on Early Childhood Education Includes Reference to Center Research

In what early childhood education advocates are heralding as an unprecedented occurrence, a North Carolina superior court judge, Howard Manning, has cited the importance of early childhood education, particularly among children ages 0-5, in his ruling on the Leandro case.

In a newsletter posted by North Carolina’s More at Four website in July of 2011, child development expert Jack Shonkoff commented: “To my knowledge, this is the first time that a court has recognized what decades of scientific research have shown — that the foundation for learning (whether strong or weak) is built long before a child starts kindergarten. Indeed, science tells us that early experiences literally shape the architecture of the developing brain. With this knowledge as a context, the Court’s decision is legally responsible, economically wise, and morally commendable.” (Read the entire article at http://bit.ly/ooHx1V.)

In his ruling, Judge Manning references a study conducted by Center researchers Ken Dodge, Helen “Sunny” Ladd, and Clara Muschkin. Their study highlights the key benefits of preschool programming, specifically North Carolina’s Smart Start and More at Four programs, which provide preschool access and a broader network of support for low-income children ages 0-5 and their families.

The researchers found that these programs have positive effects on the entire community cohort’s average academic achievement, including spillover effects, indicating that “the peers of participants also benefit, perhaps by having better-trained teachers or teachers who spend less time remediating the low performance of other students.”

To learn more about the results of the study, please visit: http://www.newsobserver.com/2011/06/07/1253644/the-worth-of-childrens-programs.html.

For a PowerPoint presentation detailing the study results, please email suzanne.valdivia@duke.edu.
Jenni Owen Joins Sanford Faculty  
by Jackie Ogburn

In August, Sanford School of Public Policy announced it was adding six new faculty members, including Jenni Owen, director of policy initiatives at the Center for Child and Family Policy. The new group brings a mix of scholarship and real-world experience in policymaking, a combination that Owen has parlayed effectively in her leadership role since joining the Center.

Owen came to Duke’s Center for Child and Family Policy in 2003 “for the opportunity to address the disconnect between research, policy and practice.” As the director of policy initiatives, she works to make research accessible to legislators and leaders, especially at the state level.

“State government is where much of the action is in the realm of social policy. North Carolina is an exciting state to be working in,” she said, while noting that networks of university centers are increasingly collaborating on research-to-policy efforts.

Owen has held a number of positions in state government, including senior policy advisor for human services under Gov. Jim Hunt. She also worked for Gov. Mike Easley during his transition into office and was planning director for the James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy.

Her work isn’t solely focused on North Carolina. She worked on Capitol Hill on the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee and then ran a career counseling program for homeless adults. Focused on bridging the gap between sectors, she earned her MPA from the Harvard Kennedy School.

Center for Child and Family Policy director and professor of public policy Ken Dodge was delighted with the news of her appointment: “Professor Owen is uniquely able to help Duke and The Sanford School succeed at its mission of placing knowledge in service to society. She understands the new knowledge that Duke faculty members generate. She understands the policy issues that confront our society, and she understands how to bring policymakers and scholars together in a two-way exchange. We need and welcome her.”

In 2007, Owen traveled to Durban, South Africa on an Eisenhower Fellowship, focusing on strategies for poverty alleviation. Recognizing opportunities for Duke students to learn from and contribute to some of the challenges she observed, she launched a DukeEngage program in Durban with nine students participating over the past two summers. In addition, Owen serves on a number of boards and committees, including the state Indigent Defense Services Commission to which Governor Easley appointed her, and the Durham Cabinet of the Triangle United Way.

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Student Recognition

Congratulations to psychology doctoral student Sandra Nay McCourt who has been awarded a Doris Duke Fellowship for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. This fellowship is designed to identify and develop a new generation of leaders capable of and interested in creating initiatives that will advance child abuse prevention practice and policy. The award includes a $25,000 stipend for the 2011-12 academic year and the opportunity to participate in a collegial learning network. It is renewable for a second year based on satisfactory progress on her dissertation, active participation in the learning networks and events, and the continued support and recommendation of her academic advisor, Ken Dodge.

Two undergraduates affiliated with the Center, Emily Bray and Jenessa Malin, were awarded the 2011 Winfred Quinton Holton Prize for Educational Research. The prize recognizes investigative research, curriculum development work, and innovative projects in education-related fields and includes a $500 cash award. Bray’s project, entitled “Recommendations for an English Language Intervention in Durham Public Schools for Community in Schools Durham,” was part of the Duke School Research Partnership program. She was mentored by research scientist Liz Snyder. Lisa Linnenbrink-Garcia, assistant professor of psychology and neuroscience, mentored Malin whose project was entitled “Self-Handicapping and Gifted Ability Messages: Motivational Process Influencing Gifted Underachievement.” Malin was one of the Center’s 2010-11 Jacqueline Anne Morris fellows.
Center researchers received funding for a range of projects:

Research Scientist Anne-Marie Iselin is collaborating with Dr. Laura di Guinta of the Sapienza University of Rome on a project recently funded by the Jacobs Foundation. Entitled “Adolescent adjustment: An integrative examination of parenting, emotion regulation, and social information processing,” this Young Scholars Award examines the mediating role of self-efficacy beliefs about emotion regulation, emotion regulation skills, and social-information processing on the relation between parenting practices and psychological adjustment. The researchers will test the hypotheses that low self-efficacy beliefs about emotion regulation, poor emotion regulation skills, and deficient social-information processing mediate the relation between harsh parenting practices and maladjustment in adolescence, i.e., aggressive and depressive symptoms. Data will be gathered from American and Italian participants in the Parenting Across Cultures (PAC) study. For three years, PAC has followed children (from age 8-11 years) and their parents. The proposed study provides new data within the PAC study, allowing researchers to examine longitudinal predictors of the mediators and setting the stage for researchers to investigate longitudinal outcomes in the future. $106,000 was awarded for the project which extends from October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2013.

The North Carolina State Board of Education has contracted with Senior Research Scholar Joel Rosch and the Center for Child and Family Policy (CCFP) to develop a web-based data collection system to collect evaluation measures for the Title V Abstinence Education State Plan. The new data collection system will be based on the model that CCFP developed for the Child and Family Support Teams, which has been functioning for over five years. The model is highly reliable and sensitive to student confidentially requirements and will allow project staff to accurately collect and record the appropriate data on clients served by the program. The Center is expected to work with the State Board of Education on this project for four years. Year 1 funding totals $73,804.

With funding from the Oak Foundation and the Brady Education Foundation, Center researchers Liz Snyder and Nicole Lawrence are leading a rigorous evaluation of the East Durham Children’s Initiative’s (EDCI) programs, as well as the initiative as a whole. EDCI was formed in 2009 to provide East Durham children and their families a pipeline of services and supports, beginning prior to birth and lasting to adulthood, that will allow children to become high academic achievers and successfully complete college or vocational training. The model is based on the acclaimed Harlem Children’s Zone initiative in New York City. Some of the programs included in the EDCI continuum include: Durham Connects, Healthy Families Durham, K-2 Parent Advocates, Backpack Buddies, and HillRAP afterschool programs at Y.E. Smith Elementary School.

By collaborating with the Center, EDCI will ensure that its programs are implemented with a high degree of efficacy and ensure continuous quality improvement. The two-year evaluation by Snyder and Lawrence will provide a unique opportunity to measure the collective and individual effects of these coordinated programs on child well-being and educational outcomes, both at the individual child level and at the community level.

Center researchers Katie Rosanbalm, Christina Christopoulos, and Jeff Quinn received funding from the East Durham Children’s Initiative for a Kindergarten-Grade 2 Readiness Data project. Following a review of the current, standardized K-2 assessment tools, data collection process, and overall data, they will provide recommendations to Durham’s Partnership for Children, the East Durham Children’s Initiative, the Duke Office of Durham and Regional Affairs, and Durham Public Schools regarding the K-2 assessment protocol and appropriate use of this information to shape planning, policy, and education. They will also provide all partners with data analysis and reports consistent with their needs and will identify a sustainability plan to maintain data analysis and reporting on a regular basis.
Recent Publications


Recent Presentations

A number of Center-affiliated faculty and researchers participated in the 2011 meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development conference held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, March 31-April 2.

The papers presented include:


The posters presented include:


Several Center-affiliated faculty and researchers participated in the 2011 Jacobs Foundation Marbach Conference, Marbach Castle, Germany:

Dodge, K.A. Adolescence: Exploration and Self-Regulation of the Unknown. Paper.


Center researchers presented papers and led workshops at the Learning and Leadership Summit on Evidence-Based Programs and Family Strengthening Practice held March 7-8, 2011, in New Bern, North Carolina. The summit was sponsored by Prevent Child Abuse North Carolina and the North Carolina Division of Social Services.

Lawrence, C.N. Fidelity to the CFT Model: Preliminary Findings from the MRS Evaluation. Paper.


Quinn, J. HELP! My Funder Requires a Logic Model and I Don’t Know How To Do One! Workshop.

**Additional presentations by Center researchers and faculty fellows:**


**Cook, P.** (2011, March). *Crime and the Business Cycle.* Invited presentation at Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Ga.


**Cook, P.** (2011, April). *Alcohol and Violence,* Washington, D.C.


**Ladd, H.** (2011, June). Consultant to World Bank project on benchmarking of school finance systems in countries around the world, Washington, D.C.


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 policymakers and practitioners, in an effort to improve the lives of children and families. We are dedicated to teaching, research and policy engagement and are focused on the areas of early childhood education, education policy and adolescent problem behavior.