Effectively managing behavioral disruptions in an elementary school classroom is a critical skill teachers need to keep their class on pace to cover the required curriculum, but one in which many teachers have received little training and support. In a typical early elementary classroom, 10-15% of students may exhibit consistent behavior problems, resulting in a loss of instructional time, not just for the child engaged in the behavior but for the other students in the classroom as well. These numbers may be greater in schools with higher-need students and in rural areas where community resources are more limited.

Desiree W. Murray, associate research professor in Duke’s Social Science Research Institute and the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, is investigating whether an evidence-based training program which supports teachers’ use of strategies for addressing disruptive behavior and teaching social-emotional skills has an impact on students’ academic achievement.

Using a randomized controlled trial design, Murray is looking at the difference in academic performance of those students whose teachers participate in the Incredible Years for Teachers (IYT) program as compared to those in the wait-list condition (who receive the training the following school year). If differences are significant, Murray says it would support the argument that professional development dollars spent on social-emotional issues translate into positive gains in learning: “Schools and school resources are highly focused on academic outcomes and it’s often difficult to get support — particularly teachers’ time — and any sort of funding for social emotional concerns, even though everyone knows that they’re related.”

The Incredible Years Training Series, developed by Carolyn Webster-Stratton, is a multi-component intervention including parent training, teacher training, and child training which are...
From the Associate Director

Center Director Kenneth Dodge is on sabbatical. Barbara Black Pollock is the Associate Director for Administration.

I began working at the Center when it was just getting off the ground back in 1999. Having been involved here for 13 years, helping with hiring researchers, advising students, and planning events, I have seen the Center grow and change. I’ve seen shifts in the funding landscape. Collaborations have been nurtured and community partnerships have blossomed. I’ve seen programs like Durham Connects evolve from a pilot project into a full-fledged community program that recently found a new home at a Durham nonprofit organization.

I have also seen the growing importance of evaluation, which led to the formal appointment of David Rabiner as associate director for program evaluation services in 2007. In this issue, we hear from Center researchers Christina Christopoulos and Katie Rosanbalm about their evaluation of a promising intensive reading intervention, HillRAP, developed by the Hill Center in Durham.

We continue to partner with community agencies that are taking on challenges here in Durham and around the country. In our Community Spotlight segment, we look at how the Center is helping to measure progress of the East Durham Children’s Initiative as over 20 agencies focus efforts in a low-income East Durham neighborhood to begin reversing a generational cycle of poverty, focusing key services and support on the youngest neighbors, age 0-5.

Under the leadership of David Rabiner and Jenni Owen, the Duke School Research Partnership program continues to expand its outreach, adding the North Carolina School of Math and Science and Orange County Schools to the list of community agencies our undergraduates partner with on independent research projects. You’ll meet junior Rohan Taneja and hear about how his research and resulting recommendations may inform future policy decisions involving the role of teaching assistants at Durham Public Schools.

The Children in Contemporary Society certificate students are also being offered a chance to incorporate research service learning into their experience in the gateway course, CCS 150/PubPol 124. With coordination provided by the Hart Leadership Program, a number of students have already rolled up their sleeves and partnered with organizations and schools here in Durham. Sophomore Pratik Shah talks about his experience facilitating specific service projects for a middle school leadership development program run by the Durham Salvation Army.

Desiree Murray, who recently joined the Center, discusses a study she and her team are conducting that assesses the impact of an intensive teacher training program, Incredible Years for Teachers, designed to increase effective management of behavior challenges in the classroom.

What you see when you’ve been around the Center a while is the commitment that the faculty, researchers, fellows, and staff have toward making a real impact in the lives of children and families. They are looking for ways to improve education practices, to support parents, to enhance children’s mental health, to reduce childhood obesity, and to share lessons learned and best practices with others who can have an impact.

As my granddaughter Riley toddles around practicing her walking, I like to think that we are all working together, doing our part to make the path ahead a little bit easier for children just like her.
Measuring Effects of Classroom Management Training

Continued from page 1

designed to reduce conduct problems, peer aggression, and disruptive behaviors and promote emotional, social, and academic competence in young children 2- to 12-years old. Incredible Years is currently being implemented across the U.S. and in 15 different countries. Locally, the parenting program is provided through the nonprofit Communities in Schools of Durham, and implementation support is being provided for 25 rural schools in Orange, Franklin, and Alamance counties have received the IYT training.

Murray explains that IYT represents a shift from brief, didactic workshops that are the norm in professional development for teachers because it requires five full days of participation over approximately five months, providing time for teachers to practice implementing strategies in their classrooms between workshops. “For the last 10 to 15 years there has been some real, growing recognition that if we want to change practice, we have to go about training in a very different way. … One of the most exciting things about this particular intervention is that it is very intensive and very comprehensive. The training methods are very collaborative and very hands-on in a way that, historically, teacher training has not been.”

IYT is designed to help preschool and elementary school teachers support the social-emotional development of all students, not just those who are at highest risk for or demonstrating disruptive behavior difficulties such as ADHD and Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). The group-based training uses a variety of active learning methods, including discussion and practice of video vignettes showing actual classroom situations. Teachers engage in behavioral rehearsals of effective strategies such as praising students, “coaching” social-emotional skills, ignoring and time out, goal-setting, and self-reflection. The training helps teachers develop skills in redirecting disruptive behavior, developing behavior plans, and building positive relationships with challenging students and their parents. Training teachers with their grade-level colleagues provides peer support and encourages implementation. According to David Rabiner, co-principal investigator on the study and the Center’s director of program evaluation services, rural school districts often don’t have as many resources to devote to such intensive professional development. Convincing principals to pull teachers out of class for five full days of training was initially a challenge, even though the study covers the cost of substitutes for all participating teachers. Parent consent has been very good overall, in the 75-80% range. Murray attributes this success to a combination of incentives for teachers, district administrator support, and a growing positive reputation of the training program. To evaluate the effects of IYT on teacher practices, members of Murray’s research team have been trained in a standardized classroom observation measure (the CLASS) that assesses teacher-student interactions and classroom management skills. The research team also collects teacher ratings of student attention, behavior, and social competence. The primary outcome, students’ academic achievement in reading and math, is measured by a computerized assessment called the STAR.

Although Murray expects that all students in participating teachers’ classrooms may receive some benefit from the intervention, a subset of children may be diverted from developing more severe behaviors that would require a higher level of support from the school, including special education placement, which is something the study will assess over the course of one school year. The cost of special education, Murray notes, is astronomical and could easily justify the expense of the intervention if placement rates or pull-out services are reduced.

The results of Murray’s study will ultimately help principals and superintendents determine whether investing in this intensive teacher training also pays dividends in the form of improved academic performance.

In addition to leading the study, Murray is in the process of becoming an IYT mentor so she can train group leaders who will then go on to train teachers. “Right now,” Murray explains, “if you want to be able to learn how to train teachers [in IYT], you have to fly to Seattle for three days, which is very expensive and not something that local agencies can do. And so once I’m a mentor (I’m a mentor-in-training now), I’ll be able to provide training here and serve as a resource for the state.”

As interest in Incredible Years here in North Carolina continues to grow, Murray will likely be a mentor in high demand. Several agencies providing the Incredible Years parent program across the state have also expressed interest in the teacher program, and Murray is working with PCANC to develop an infrastructure to provide this training and mentoring across the state. Murray is also participating in an implementation design team led by Communities in Schools of Durham in consultation with the National Implementation Research Network to plan for implementation of all three Incredible Years components (parent, teacher, and child training) in 2013. Murray is looking forward to combining this work with her research in the future. ▲

By Desiree Murray with Suzanne Valdivia
Researchers at the Center for Child and Family Policy fill a critical niche by acting as independent evaluators of programs and interventions being funded by government grants, tax dollars, and private foundations. Over the past few years, funders have stepped up requirements from grantees to demonstrate evidence of a program’s impact, according to Center Researcher Christina Christopoulos. “I’ve seen it both here in Durham County and I’ve seen it in Alamance County, the two places I have been working... there is more and more emphasis on accountability,” she said.

She points out that some agencies, like the Partnership for Children in Alamance County, for example, have responded by hiring their own in-house, independent evaluators. For other organizations, it makes better fiscal sense to contract with organizations like the Center whose employees bring specialized knowledge and experience in assessment. Agencies then use these evaluations to improve their programs, and funders are able to get a real picture of the return on investment for specific programs or interventions.

Findings from recent Center evaluations have helped inform strategies of national organizations like America’s Promise in its efforts to reduce the dropout rate. Center researchers also have assessed statewide initiatives such as the Multiple Response System, as well as local programs like the Hill Center Reading Achievement Program (HillRAP), which was offered to students in Durham Public Schools (DPS).

In the case of the HillRAP evaluation, Christopoulos and fellow Center Researcher Katie Rosanbalm were tasked with determining whether a reading intervention that has been used at the Hill Center – a private school which “provides an intensive remediation program to students with specific learning disabilities or attention deficit disorders”¹ – could effectively be exported to students in a public school setting in Durham.

Founded in Durham in 1977, the Hill Center also serves as a resource to organizations and schools around the country – anyone wanting to know more about learning disabilities or attention deficit disorders and related instructional methods. This kind of collaborative attitude and belief in resource sharing led the Hill Center to partner with DPS through financial support from the GlaxoSmithKline Foundation.

In order to reach those students whom DPS administrators felt the intervention could help most, they targeted students at the lowest-performing schools. Christopoulos explains, “They selected kids who were failing or were at risk for failing the End of Grade test or those who had an ‘exceptional child’ designation. They may be learning disabled or have ADD, a visual impairment, or a hearing impairment.”

HillRAP was given to 176 students from 13 elementary and three middle schools in Durham who were at least two years behind in reading. They participated daily in small group sessions with a four-to-one student-to-teacher ratio. The small group setting enables the teacher to interact multiple times with each student, providing immediate feedback as they focus on increasing phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The approach involves breaking down each task into manageable steps and explicitly teaching each skill to mastery.

Results of this initial effort suggest that the program is making a positive impact. Rosanbalm explains, “After participation in the HillRAP program, these kids who have been getting more and more behind every single year...”
have made gains faster that year than their peers…. So they are catching up to their peers.”

Christopoulos adds, “We also found that the children in the younger grades made progress at a faster rate, which makes perfect, logical sense. The earlier you get them, the less maladaptive learning patterns are established, the less those patterns are ingrained.”

Feedback from students and teachers about the HillRAP program has been positive. “The teachers from the public school system are very impressed with the program,” Christopoulos says. “They have letters that the kids have written to them about how discouraged they were about reading beforehand and how much they love reading now. There is a lot of anecdotal evidence that this is working, both from the teacher’s perspective and the kids’ perspective…. But of course you can’t take that at face value – you have to prove it.”

To determine whether the added intervention of HillRAP was solely responsible for the students’ gains, and not any other factor, Christopoulos and Rosanbalm are pursuing the next step – securing funding to run a randomized controlled trial with a wider sample.

One other area that warrants follow up is the fact that Latino students made the largest gains when compared to other ethnic groups that received the HillRAP intervention. The researchers’ preliminary hypothesis is that the lag among Latino students is more likely due to their lack of familiarity with English and not an actual learning disability. “They just don’t know the English language,” Christopoulos says, “so by teaching them the structure of the language, they can take off a lot faster.”

For Rosanbalm, this finding points to a much larger issue involving student assessment. She sees a need for testing non-native English speakers in their native languages so that they don’t get tagged with a label that doesn’t fit. “If kids were tested in their native language, and we knew that their reading delay wasn’t caused by a learning disability but was a language thing, we would give them a different intervention than this one.”

Through their efforts, Christopoulos and Rosanbalm are not only helping to inform future district and school selection of an effective literacy curriculum, they are highlighting possible improvements for even broader policy issues involving student assessment in the public school system.

Suzanne Valdivia is the Center’s communications specialist.

1 http://www.hillcenter.org/index.php/about-us/who-we-are/overview
The Children in Contemporary Society (CCS) certificate enables undergraduate students to pursue a course of study in which they use a multidisciplinary approach to analyze the issues facing families, children, and the society that is responsible for their development. The signature feature of the certificate program is the opportunity for students to engage in a one-on-one mentored research experience to study these issues.

According to the director of the program, Clara Muschkin, “The CCS certificate program has provided talented students the opportunity to pursue their interests in issues related to childhood in an integrated and multidisciplinary manner that was not previously available to undergraduates. We are very pleased with the high quality of CCS students’ research and look forward to hearing about their continued success in their chosen careers.”

Please join us in congratulating this year’s graduating seniors who come from a variety of disciplines: sociology, public policy studies, and psychology. We asked them to tell us about the classes they have taken, their experience in the program, and their future plans.

Felicia Arriaga is a sociology major who is also minoring in cultural anthropology. She writes, “I learned a lot about contemporary issues, and I was able to apply the information I learned in class to various aspects of my daily life. It was nice to connect hands-on experience with classroom work while working on my research project and while taking Making Social Policy.

This class allowed me to work on a project I was very passionate about while learning to work with group members. I was able to work with the North Carolina Network of Grantmakers, researching alternative pathways to success for high school students who are not enrolled in four-year colleges/universities. I learned a lot of basic information about the high school and college/university system within North Carolina, and I learned how to effectively share findings with classmates and with our policy partner.

One of the highlights of the certificate program for me was working with Professor Anna Gassman-Pines on her Mexican Families Study. I not only made this my research project, but I also helped collect the data for her dataset. I learned valuable skills for collecting primary data and was able to use my Spanish-speaking skills to interact with people within the Durham and Chapel Hill communities. My study focused on the differences in the amount of time fathers and mothers spent with their children throughout the day.

After graduation from Duke, I will be pursuing a Ph.D. in sociology. I would like to conduct research in education inequalities linked to race and socioeconomic status.”

Michelle Barbera is a psychology major (developmental psychology concentration) who is also minoring in education. She is student teaching in a fourth-grade class at Club Boulevard Humanities Magnet Elementary School this spring. She reports, “Through the CCS certificate, I’ve been able to explore the policy issues facing children through the lens of psychology and education. I first became interested in the certificate after taking the introduction class, CCS 150. I enrolled in the class after spending a summer teaching inner-city, low-income students and, through the class, gained a much deeper understanding of the challenges that those students face. When I chose education as my minor, I was able to weave it into the certificate program through the electives that I took and continue to explore how policy affects schools. At the same time, I became interested in using psychology as a means to understand the best way to teach children.

I tied the CCS research project into my major by completing an honors thesis through the psychology department. I designed and executed a study which tested the way that early elementary school students process and learn from written texts. I am excited to continue using my results in the CCS capstone class because, while an extensive amount of current psychological research is centered around education, very little is disseminated to teachers. I think that the capstone course is helping me to present my findings in a way that educators can understand.
and implement in their classrooms.

After graduation, I will be working for the Inner-City Teaching Corps in Chicago. The program focuses on sending qualified teachers into Chicago’s urban schools, so I will be teaching at a low-income middle school while I complete a master’s degree in education at Northwestern University. I can’t wait to take everything that I’ve learned about urban education and effective teaching strategies to make a positive impact in the classroom!”

Public policy studies major Emily Eshman writes, “I very much enjoyed the coursework I pursued to fulfill the certificate requirements. I gained a holistic perspective on issues currently facing our society’s children and gained insight and knowledge on how to analytically approach these issues and problem-solve to effect change. The most valuable part of this experience was getting to establish meaningful relationships with the professors in my CCS courses who have continued to act as a resource even beyond the scope of their courses.

My research project involved working with the Durham Public Schools to address the achievement loss and behavior problem increase associated with the transition from elementary to middle school. I researched best practices for mitigating these issues that could be utilized in Durham middle schools. I am still in the process of deciding on my post-graduation plans; however, I am considering offers from two alternative teaching certification programs in Washington, D.C.”

Ivy Prince, a public policy studies major, highly recommends the certificate program. She says, “I feel that I have gained the most practical experience and benefit from my CCS classes. The topics are applicable and [focus on] what I believe to be most important about society today and in the future. I really enjoyed working with Ann Skinner and Sheila Miglarese on my research project, which allowed me to help identify the key characteristics for a successful Durham family academy.

It was a great experience to gain so much one-on-one time with successful, dedicated professionals. I certainly benefited from the entire project, perhaps more than any other class at Duke. I plan to move to New York City when I graduate and do consulting work for Ernst and Young.”

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Spring 2012 Courses

**Children in Contemporary Society**  
(CCS 150/PubPol 124)  
**Instructor:** Leslie Babinski, Research Scientist  
Using an interdisciplinary approach, this course provides an overview of issues facing today’s youth, from childhood through adolescence. This course is required for students working on the Children in Contemporary Society certificate but is open to all undergraduates. ▲

**Multidisciplinary Approaches to Contemporary Children’s Issues**  
(CCS 191S)  
**Instructor:** Joel Rosch, Senior Research Scholar  
This course, which is open to any student in the social sciences who has completed or is completing an independent research project through independent study or honors thesis, requires students to re-examine their original research on a problem and re-analyze it from a policy perspective using multiple disciplines, such as history, economics, political science, sociology, and psychology. Capstone course required for the Children in Contemporary Society certificate program. ▲

**Multi-Method Approaches to Social and Policy Research**  
(PubPol 183/CCS 183)  
**Instructor:** Jose Sandoval, Statistician  
The overall aim of this course is to prepare students for independent research in the social sciences and public policy. Students examine the crucial steps involved in conducting social science research, including developing research questions and hypotheses, research designs, and methods of data analysis. This class helps students understand and critically evaluate the research of others and provides the tools students need in order to develop their own research projects. This course fulfills the research methods requirement for the Children in Contemporary Society certificate program. ▲
Every fall, undergraduates enrolled in the Children in Contemporary Society (CCS) Cornerstone Course 150, taught by Professor Clara Muschkin, are offered the chance to incorporate a research service-learning (RSL) component into their coursework. Those students then volunteer at a Durham nonprofit organization that is addressing one of the issues being covered in the class — violence, health inequalities, and poverty — with particular emphasis on how children are being impacted. As Fernande Legros, research service-learning coordinator for the Hart Leadership Program explains, “By contextualizing and localizing what students are learning in the classroom, they are forced to grapple with the discrepancies that sometimes exist between theory (in this case, policies) and practice (i.e., how policies are implemented and experienced on the ground).”

Legros coordinates the RSL component of CCS 150 and other public policy courses. During the past two years, she linked students with community partners, including the Salvation Army’s Torch Club; Genesis Home, an organization which helps homeless families achieve self-sufficiency; and Jordan High School’s Freshman Academy program, which supports ninth-grade students throughout their freshman year.

“For many students,” Legros explains, “the RSL gateway option may be their first sustained involvement with the Duke community.” Sophomore Pratik Shah signed on to mentor 17 middle school students in the Torch Club, a leadership development program for middle school students at the Salvation Army. Shah provided participants with a range of different service project options and helped guide their selection based on a specific value the students wanted to highlight. He then facilitated the students’ participation in each effort. Together, they wrote letters to soldiers stationed in Afghanistan, connected to pen pals at a Kenyan orphanage, and baked cookies for residents at the Ronald McDonald House.

It took time for Shah to earn the students’ trust. “In the end,” he said, “I learned more from these kids than I imagined…. The most rewarding aspect of this experience was the reflection sessions where the kids appreciated how this ‘ritual’ of setting a value goal that ties to a service project was directly applicable to life.”

As part of the requirements for the RSL component, Shah was required to participate in two critical reflection sessions of his own, facilitated by Muschkin. In addition, he prepared a research paper about various factors that influence adolescent behavior and linked those to his mentoring experience, as well as to the course content.

“Pratik and the other students in that group did a great job of designing activities the Torch Club kids could engage in, helping other children and serving as role models for younger children,” said Muschkin. “In our coursework, we explored how important it can be for middle schoolers to experience success and to provide and receive positive peer support.”

Having completed the RSL portion of the gateway course, students can advance to subsequent stages of the RSL pathway through the Hart Leadership Program. As a result of their participation in the RSL component of the CCS cornerstone course, a number of students have enrolled in the Children in Contemporary Society certificate program, which enables them to further pursue their interests by conducting research in real-world settings.

Shah is enthusiastic about continuing his engagement with community organizations in the future. That energy, when applied to a specific issue, can make a concrete contribution to the children and families that these nonprofit organizations serve. Says Legros, “Our community partners, in their final evaluations, often remark on the fresh perspective and excitement that our students bring, and they view our students as important resources in meeting some of their specific needs.”

Together, they wrote letters to soldiers stationed in Afghanistan, connected to pen pals at a Kenyan orphanage, and baked cookies for residents at the Ronald McDonald House.
In September, state officials launched a new program called “No Kid Hungry” to provide federally funded school breakfasts to more children in North Carolina. This effort to fight childhood hunger is now being tested in 28 schools across the state, including one in Durham.

It’s a great start toward providing quality nutrition to low-income children. But because early eating habits impact weight gain and health issues across a child’s life, the need for healthy meals starts much earlier than grade school.

North Carolina has the 11th-highest rate of childhood obesity in the nation, and about 30 percent of children under the age of 5 in the state are overweight or obese. This puts these children at a higher risk of developing asthma, diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. The stigma of obesity also means these children are more likely to face bullying and teasing and have higher rates of depression.

These consequences not only hurt a child’s well-being. They eventually impact an entire community through higher health care costs, poorer school performance, and reduced worker productivity.

It doesn’t need to be this way. There are many approaches designed to reduce obesity among the youngest children by helping them adopt healthy eating habits and get proper nutrition.

Earlier this year, the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University, through its nonpartisan N.C. Family Impact Seminar, met with members of the legislature to discuss a variety of policies being pursued here and in other states to improve preschoolers’ nutrition levels and prevent or reduce childhood obesity. Two areas that could have a strong, positive impact are the further expansion of the farm-to-preschool movement and the implementation of new state child care nutrition regulations.

The farm-to-preschool movement brings fresh, nutritious foods from local farms to children in nearby preschools and child care centers. Research has shown that children in North Carolina preschools don’t eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables, contributing to higher obesity rates. By targeting meals served in those settings, there is potential to significantly improve child health.

Last year about 240,000 North Carolina children under age 5 were enrolled in some form of child care. Most of these children eat at least two meals or snacks a day in the centers; increasing the nutritional levels of foods and beverages served in child care centers could substantially enrich each child’s diet overall.

Farm-to-preschool programs also ensure that children try a range of nutritious fruits and vegetables, while learning about how food is grown. The programs also help to guarantee the sustainability of local farms.

North Carolina is home to two programs that could be replicated elsewhere. Growing Minds, created by the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project, acts as a facilitator between farms and pre-K-12 schools to increase education about agriculture and healthy nutrition and to bring produce into schools. Watch Me Grow is a gardening program created by Duke that works with child care centers to establish gardens for their own use and helps centers find healthy, low-cost sources of food. Child care centers that participate in the Watch Me Grow program use the produce from their gardens to provide an additional serving of vegetables to children each day.

We can support these programs, and help create new ones, by changing state regulations and subsidies governing child care meals. We don’t want to add burdensome requirements for child care, but rather encourage healthy practices and reward those programs that provide healthy nutrition for our children. For instance, by subsidizing the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables, we can shift child care centers from buying juice (with high levels of natural sugar) to buying fresh produce.

Helping connect farms with nearby preschools and child care centers forms the kinds of relationships that will benefit us all – children, families, communities, and local farmers.

Maeve E. Gearing is a doctoral candidate in public policy and a Sulzberger/Levitan fellow at the Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University. Sara Benjamin Neelon is an assistant professor in the Department of Community and Family Medicine at the Duke University Medical Center and Duke Global Health Institute and a faculty fellow at the Center for Child and Family Policy.
Launched in 2009, the East Durham Children’s Initiative (EDCI) is now in its first year of implementation, having coalesced 20 partner agencies that are delivering 40 targeted programs and services to families living in one of the lowest-income neighborhoods in Durham. The goal is to prepare every one of the 3,000 children living in the 120-block span for either college or a career.

This “pipeline of services” is modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone, a program aimed at breaking the generational cycle of poverty for families living in Harlem, which was developed by social activist and educator Geoffrey Canada. Key leaders from Durham, including Durham County Commissioner Ellen Reckhow; Minnie Forte Brown, chair of the Durham Public Schools Board of Education; Barker French, co-chair of EDCI; and Wanda Boone, a community activist, took a field trip to the Harlem Children’s Zone in 2009 to meet with Canada in person and learn more about the program. As EDCI’s Director David Reese explains, “They got excited. They came back and they said, ‘You know what? We can do this. We can replicate this here in Durham.’”

This year, EDCI has been able to capitalize on the first two years of planning, which involved asking families living in the zone to identify what services were needed most and bringing in providers who could most effectively deliver those services. The initial Kitchen Table meeting with residents was coordinated by Boone, a long-time advocate for Durham youth. At those meetings, Reese explains, “We started asking, ‘What works in your community? What doesn’t work? What would you change? And what are some of the myths about East Durham?’”

Kindergarten readiness and access to high-quality child care are two critical issues that EDCI is addressing. Reese remembers conversations with kindergarten teachers from Y.E. Smith Elementary School who expressed deep concern because students were entering kindergarten without knowing numbers, colors, shapes, or how to write their names. As Reese describes the challenge of gathering all the partners and coordinating outreach and delivery, he underscores how those who are involved in service delivery are being asked to go beyond their immediate sphere of influence. For example, kindergarten teachers are not only focused on the school year, they have also expanded their role to include working with families and children on making an effective transition into kindergarten.

Kindergarten readiness and access to high-quality child care are two critical issues that EDCI is addressing. Reese remembers conversations with kindergarten teachers from Y.E. Smith Elementary School who expressed deep concern because students were entering kindergarten without knowing numbers, colors, shapes, or how to write their names.
To address this gap in basic skills and preparedness, the Stepping Stones summer kindergarten readiness program is being offered to rising kindergarteners who have had little or no experience in a formal preschool. The program, funded by Duke’s Office of Durham and Regional Affairs, is delivered by the kindergarten teachers at Y.E. Smith. Children are given a chance to adjust to a regular schoolday routine. They are coached on how to express emotions with their peers, and they are introduced to numbers, shapes, colors, and letters. This dress rehearsal goes a long way toward helping level the playing field in time for their first day of kindergarten.

One of the keys to ensuring the success of EDCI hinges on making the resources and programs easily accessible to families and making sure families are aware of what is available. EDCI has hired “parent advocates” who visit each family in a specific grade, orienting families to the array of wraparound services. “Their major communication to parents,” says Reese, “is ‘I work for you.’” By addressing food shortage, housing insecurity, and other basic concerns through the pipeline of services, Reese explains that parents can then begin thinking about longer-term goals like sending their children to college.

EDCI is partnering with research scientists Liz Snyder and Nicole Lawrence at the Center for Child and Family Policy to evaluate the impact of EDCI’s individual programs and of the initiative as a whole, and to provide consultation about the initiative’s direction. Their findings will enable EDCI partners to tweak programs and improve collaboration, communication, and data collection along the way. As EDCI adds to the number of programs being offered, the evaluation will expand to incorporate them.

Snyder and Lawrence are also in the process of taking an existing case management system and redesigning it so that all 20+ providers can enter data, and every child and family receiving services will be tracked. “So we’ll know if a child was at the Holton Clinic,” says Reese. “We’ll know if a child is in after school. We’ll know if a child is having some interactions with advocates or their families are having interactions — and if referrals are being made.” And while there is a clear commitment to ongoing evaluation and improvement, EDCI leaders are not setting an end date. “When we think about generational cycles of poverty,” Reese explains, “to say that we would achieve our goal of getting kids ready for college or career in a year, two years, three years — I think that’s very unrealistic.”

Center Director Kenneth Dodge serves on EDCI’s technical advisory board, helping to define what success means for the initiative and how to measure it. Dodge sees the wisdom in concentrating the majority of services in the 0-5 age range. “A wealth of evidence indicates that most of the disparities in outcomes for children are attributable to early disadvantage and that early investments bring the strongest return.”

Reese agrees, offering this analogy: “If I’m in Vegas and I’ve got my chips and I look at our pipeline, I put the majority of my chips in 0-5. Those kids are going to receive [the majority] of these interventions…. We’re starting from the time you bring this baby home. We are there talking about getting you and your child ready for kindergarten, getting your child to college.”

EDCI is a program of the Center for Child and Family Policy.

Suzanne Valdivia is the Center’s communications specialist.
The desire to extend community service into a more long-lasting legacy drove Rohan Taneja to apply for the Duke University School Research Partnership (SRP) project last semester. Taneja, a junior in public policy studies at Duke, said he has long been interested in education policy work. He is the community service chairman for his fraternity, Delta Tau Delta, and coordinated the “Adopt a School” program, which is the fraternity’s main philanthropy.

“I do a lot of community service and tutoring, and I wanted to translate that into something more academic,” Taneja said. “I found a really good avenue through the SRP program.”

The School Research Partnership Office, headed by Jenni Owen and David Rabiner at the Center for Child and Family Policy, fields a series of research requests every semester from community partners such as Durham Public Schools (DPS), Communities in Schools of Durham, the Duke Hospital School, and the N.C. Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. This year, the program has expanded to include Orange County Schools and the N.C. School of Science and Math.

Students are matched with one of the community partners and, with guidance from a faculty advisor, they conduct a semester-long independent study. At the conclusion of the project, students submit a policy brief with specific recommendations, as well as a 25-page paper, with the intention that the community partner will use the information to inform future policymaking discussions and decisions.

For Taneja’s project, Dr. Debbie Pitman, DPS area superintendent of elementary curriculum, requested research into the roles that teacher assistants (TAs) play in elementary school classrooms and potential strategies for improving the effectiveness of TAs in the district. “The district sought research on topics that aligned to current, practical issues relevant to our school leaders,” Pitman explained.

Durham Public Schools employs about 500 teacher assistants. They perform a number of tasks which include leading individual and small-group learning exercises, preparing classroom activities, handling clerical duties, and managing student behavior and evaluations. By taking on those responsibilities, TAs enable more effective classroom management, and classroom teachers can increase the amount of interaction they have with students. Through their work with small groups and individual students, TAs lower the teacher-pupil ratio, which has been shown to improve student performance. In addition, TAs assist with individual student behavior management, allowing the teachers to focus on whole class instruction.

Taneja worked with Pitman as well as his advisor, Leslie Babinski, to develop and administer an online survey for all DPS elementary school principals.

The majority of principals who responded to the survey indicated that training should be improved for TAs as well as teachers who have TAs in their classrooms. Many principals indicated that existing training for TAs was nonexistent or “poor,” and it was often left up to the individual.

Combining the results of the survey and the literature review, Taneja made several recommendations to Dr. Pitman and DPS administrators that could
improve TA efficacy without increasing hiring costs:
• Consider implementing a district-wide training program for teacher assistants;
• Clarify policy recommendations delineating the appropriate roles for teacher assistants; and
• Connect teacher assistants to professional development opportunities.

“This was my first time writing a real literature review and doing my own survey data,” Taneja said. “Dr. Babinski guided me really well through the entire process. To be able to see that end product was really rewarding to me.”

When he started the project, Taneja wasn’t sure whether the research would produce any tangible policy impact, but “the idea of district-wide training – the data threw it out at us as an answer,” Taneja said. “And I think that’s great because it’s not something that we went in with a preconception of finding, it’s just something we happened upon.”

Dr. Pitman said she has shared Taneja’s research with principals and district leadership, and it will be used by School Improvement Teams to explore strategies to impact student achievement. She said she found the entire experience to be extremely positive. “The district is fortunate to have Duke University as a research partner assisting Durham Public Schools with practical issues,” she said. “Rohan Taneja and Dr. Babinski were targeted, focused, and well informed on the topic. Mr. Taneja was well prepared for the research project and took the work very seriously.”

Taneja said he is seeing the benefits of the program already. “It’s definitely had a huge impact on me. I’m starting my honor’s thesis this semester – it’s actually on a completely different topic – but learning how to come up with your own methodology of research, how to work with an advisor... all the soft skills associated with research are so important,” he explained. “At the end of the day when you come up with a product that not only is your own, that you created – but something you actually delivered to the community that can have a tangible, positive impact – it’s not something that you can really do in other more conventional classes.”

Babinski was impressed by the depth and breadth of Taneja’s research. “One of the things I liked most about Rohan’s project was that he was very thorough in looking at the national research on the subject, and then he added in local data to make sure that it was especially relevant to the school system. He started with a national view and was able to bring it down to the local level.”

Babinski said the SRP’s student research work engages students and advisors in a real-world problem and provides valuable information to policymakers that helps bridge the gap between research and the policies and practices in schools. Much of the value from the SRP program comes from the process of working with the community partner to identify the problem and then determining what research approach would provide the most meaningful data, according to Babinski. “Rohan addressed an important question,” she added. “It was a timely topic with clear-cut policy implications regarding the role of TAs in the classroom and the professional development opportunities available to them.”

Erika Layko is the Center’s meeting and events coordinator.
Awards and Honors

Congratulations to the following faculty fellows who received prestigious awards in recent months:

Anna Gassman-Pines, assistant professor of public policy, was selected as the first recipient of the Victoria S. Levin Award for Early Career Success in Young Children's Mental Health Research.

The award, given by the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), recognizes Gassman-Pines’ interdisciplinary work on the effects of welfare and employment policies on the well-being of low-income young children and their mothers. In addition to the importance of these issues, her research proposal is distinguished by the use of innovative, sophisticated methods to assess the effects of public policy on daily functioning of young children and their parents, according to SRCD.

The Levin award aims to heighten the chances of early career success in achieving federal funding for developmentally informed research that addresses the early foundations of children's mental health and well-being. The $25,000 awarded to Gassman-Pines will support a reduction in teaching responsibilities, during which time she will submit a grant application to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in the area of early childhood mental health. The award also provides for mentoring and other support for the NIH grant application.

Gassman-Pines’ research proposal, “Daily Variation in Parental Work Experiences, Family Processes, and Young Children’s Behavior,” would seek to assess how parents’ daily experiences in the workplace relate to family functioning and their children’s behavior. Most similar research has focused on a single point in time, rather than the day-to-day variation within the same family, and on working mothers, Gassman-Pines said.

“Despite the fact that both mothers and fathers are very important to child development, most employment research relates to the mother’s employment rather than the employment of mothers and fathers, and that’s where the research literature has been for a long time,” Gassman-Pines said.

Adapted from SRCD’s award announcement.

William “Sandy” Darity has been named the Samuel Z. Westerfield Award recipient for 2012 by the National Economic Association (NEA). The award, the NEA’s highest honor, was presented on January 7, 2012, at the organization’s annual meeting in Chicago. The Westerfield Award is named after the distinguished economist and former ambassador to Liberia. Established in 1973, it acknowledges outstanding scholarly achievements and public service by an African American economist.

In addition to being the Arts & Sciences Professor of Public Policy in the Sanford School, Darity is also chair of Duke’s Department of African and African American Studies, a professor of economics and director of the Research Network on Racial and Ethnic Inequality. His research focuses on inequalities related to race, class, and ethnicity; stratification economics; the racial achievement gap in education; and skin shade and labor market outcomes.

Excerpted from APPAM’s award announcement:

The Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM) has selected Charles Clotfelter, Z. Smith Reynolds Professor of Public Policy and professor of economics and law and the director of the Center for the Study of Philanthropy and Voluntarism at Duke University, as the recipient of the 2011 Spencer Foundation Award. The Spencer Foundation Award recognizes noteworthy contributions through research and analysis in the field of education policy and management. The awardee delivers a lecture at the APPAM Fall Research Conference.

Clotfelter has made voluminous contributions to the scholarly field of education policy. His two most recent books are After Brown: The Rise and Retreat of School Segregation, an impressive study of school desegregation during the past 50 years, and his latest book, Big-Time Sports in American Universities. With colleagues at Duke, he has also published empirical studies using rich North Carolina data to investigate racial segregation in schools, accountability, teacher quality, and teacher labor markets. Professor Clotfelter’s research is rigorous, insightful, and serves as a model for academic scholarship in the field of education policy.

Michael S. McPherson, president of the Spencer Foundation and a member of the award selection committee notes, “Charlie Clotfelter tackles issues and topics that have great policy significance. He is exceptionally versatile in the range of methods (econometric, historical, and case study, among others)
that he employs, and he writes accessibly and clearly. He is also about the nicest person you would ever want to meet. As they say in the sports world that Charlie has just written incisively about, ‘he’s got the whole package.’"

In Big-Time Sports in American Universities, published in 2010 by Cambridge University Press, Clotfelter has drawn the public’s attention to the topic of commercial sports in a university setting through articles in The Chronicle of Higher Education, the Washington Post, and numerous other newspapers and media outlets. He is raising public

consciousness and contributing to education policy debate by challenging the tax deduction for major college sports; asking university leaders whether sports is, or should be, in their mission statement; and wondering what responsibility the university has to local and national communities. The list of contributions by Professor Clotfelter goes on at great length. In every endeavor, Professor Clotfelter combines rigorous scholarship with public engagement in policy topics of contemporary importance. ▲

Funding Awards

Center Research Scientist Leslie Babinski, in collaboration with researchers from N.C. State and UNC-Chapel Hill, has been awarded a $1.4 million grant from the Department of Education’s Institute of Education Science to support the development of a comprehensive teacher professional development program aimed at increasing classroom teachers’ skills in working with Latino English Learner (EL) students and their families.

Babinski will serve as principal investigator for the project. The team also includes Steve Amendum of N.C. State and Steve Knotek and Marta Sanchez of UNC-Chapel Hill.

During the first phase of the project, the research team will solicit feedback on their initial training design from principals, K-2 teachers, ESL teachers, and Latino parents of EL students. The resulting year-long professional development program will feature ESL teachers consulting and collaborating with classroom teachers, enhancing the teachers’ capacity to improve the students’ language and literacy skills, and strengthen school-home connections.

Working with a small group of teachers, the research team will test the training program in a pre-pilot phase in the Chapel Hill/Carrboro, Orange County, and Chatham County schools. Following this feasibility assessment, the research team will implement a full pilot test with 40 classroom teachers and ten ESL teachers from ten schools. Researchers will monitor both teacher and student outcomes to determine if the training has potential as a national model for increasing teachers’ skills for working with students who are learning English. ▲

On January 2, 2012, the NIDA-funded Transdisciplinary Prevention Research Center (TPRC) and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) began a six-year partnership that will enable TPRC investigators to sample North Carolina public school students for the purpose of research aimed at improving academic outcomes through better and earlier prediction of risk and resiliency. A part-time NCDPI employee will work in collaboration with staff who manage the North Carolina Education Research Data Center to draw samples and initiate contact with individuals who meet specific study criteria. This fledgling partnership promises to strengthen TPRC research efforts while providing useful new information to NCDPI. ▲

Announcements

Congratulations to Jennifer Lansford who was promoted to research professor in the Social Science Research Institute as of January 1, 2012. Her research continues to focus on the development of aggression and other behavior problems in youth, with an emphasis on how family and peer contexts contribute to or protect against these outcomes. She examines how experiences with parents and peers affect the development of children’s behavior problems, how influence operates in adolescent peer groups, and how cultural contexts moderate links between parents’ discipline strategies and children’s behavior problems.

Lansford is the principal investigator of the largest multicultural study to date that examines how parents’ discipline strategies and other aspects of parent-child relationships affect children’s development. Through this project, an international group of researchers is conducting interviews with children, mothers, and fathers in nine countries (China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, the Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and the United States) that address questions related to parents’ warmth, control, discipline strategies, attitudes, and beliefs, and childrens’ behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. ▲

Center Faculty Fellow Desiree Murray was appointed associate research professor in the Social Science Research Institute beginning in January 2012, having transferred from the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Murray 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 to teacher training. Her current research is featured in the cover story of this issue of Bridge. ▲


*College Drinking and Drug Use*, a book co-edited by David Rabiner and Helene White (from Rutgers University) was published recently by Guilford Press. The book is based on a conference with the same title that was held at the Center in May 2010. The book includes contributions from a diverse group of researchers and clinicians from across the U.S. and addresses multiple aspects of this complex issue. The topics covered include the nature and extent of substance use on campus, factors that contribute to substance use, its short- and long-term effects, intervention and prevention programs, and potential policy issues for addressing student drinking.

The Center has released a report commissioned by America’s Promise Alliance, a national organization working to ensure that all young people graduate from high school ready for college, work, and life. The report identifies ten national and state indicators of academic achievement and youth success that scientific literature has shown to be important factors when tracking graduation rates. The report was written by Center researchers Beth Gifford, Kelly Evans, Lisa Berlin, and Yu Bai.
The following presentations were made at the American Public Health Association’s annual meeting in Washington, D.C. from October 29 to November 2, 2011:

**Cook, P.** (2011, October) 50 States as Laboratory: Quasi-Experimental Panel-Data Methods.


**Sloan, F., Chepke, L., Acquah, K., Blevins, C., Gifford, E.** (2011, October) How Specialty Courts Affect Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care.

**Ananat, E., Gassman-Pines, A., Francis, D., & Gibson-Davis, C.** Children Left Behind: The Effects of Statewide Job Loss on Student Achievement.

**Jenni Owen** organized and moderated a roundtable session: Scaling Up What Works: The Next Challenge in Evidence-Based Policymaking? with panelists Jon Baron (Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy), Gordon Berlin (MDRC), Bob Granger (W.T. Grant Foundation), and Kathy Stack (U.S. Office of Management and Budget).

**Clotfelter, Charles T.** 2011 Spencer Foundation Award Lecture – Sports and Populism at State U.

**Clotfelter, C.T., Ladd, H.F., Vigdor, J., & Muschkin, C.** Success in Community College: Do Institutions Differ?


**Ladd, H.F., Muschkin, C., & Dodge, K.** From Birth to School: The Effects of Early Childhood Programs on Educational Outcomes in North Carolina.
On January 26, 2012, Leslie Babinski and Clara Muschkin each presented their research during a panel discussion with other Duke faculty entitled “An Interdisciplinary Approach to Education.” This event was part of Duke Education Awareness Week. The goal of the week, encompassing several events, was to raise awareness at the university about educational equity and bring diverse groups together to engage in meaningful conversations about the future of education.

On February 7, 2012, Center Research Analyst Jeff Quinn discussed the importance of father involvement in early childhood development and shared suggestions on how fathers can get involved in their children’s lives during the workshop, “Getting Fathers Involved with Young Children,” sponsored by the Early Childhood Faith Initiative in Durham, NC.

On February 13, 2012, Center Associate Director and Professor of Psychology Phil Costanzo gave a presentation at the Center for Developmental Science in Chapel Hill entitled “Social Influence, Self Persuasion, and the Reduction of Substance Abuse Risk in Adolescents: Employing ‘Old-Fashioned’ Social Psychology with Modern Day Youth.”


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.