Summary

SEED Meeting on
Early Childhood Professional Development and Training
And Children's Successful Transition to Elementary School

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This meeting had two goals: (1) to present emerging research on the linkages between children's successful transition to elementary school and professional development and training in the early childhood workforce across the range of care and education settings, and (2) to identify meaningful directions for further research on this topic.

The meeting was sponsored by the SEED (Science and the Ecology of Early Development) consortium of federal agencies that sponsor joint research meetings and research initiatives focusing on the contexts of early childhood development. The federal agencies participating in the SEED consortium include, w*ithin the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*:

- The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development,
- The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation,
- The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation within the Administration for Children and Families;
- The Child Care Bureau within the Administration for Children and Families; and
- The Centers for Disease Control; and

Within the U.S. Department of Education:

- The Institute for Education Sciences;
- The National Center for Education Statistics;
- The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services; and
- The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

All of the SEED agencies participated in planning and running the meeting, with the Child Care Bureau playing a lead role in this particular meeting.

A growing emphasis is being placed at the state and national levels on "school readiness:" preparing children to enter elementary school ready to engage positively with adults and other children in a formal school setting, open and eager to learn, and with enough basic knowledge to build from. This emphasis on school readiness requires us to look backward at the range of early childhood experiences that children have participated in prior to kindergarten, and how these early childhood settings can foster a successful transition to elementary school.

A central issue concerns the extent and nature of education and training that the early childhood workforce currently has: How much and in what ways are early childhood caregivers and teachers themselves prepared so that they can foster school readiness in children? A number of challenges emerge in research seeking to address this underlying question.

Key Issues Explored During the Meeting:

- *The need to describe professional development and training as it is occurring across a wide range of early childhood settings.* While a majority of children in the United States have experienced nonmaternal care on a regular basis at some point in their early years, there is substantial variation in the types of care they participate in. These include home-based child care settings (with care provided by license-exempt family, friends, neighbors and nannies, as well as by licensed in-home providers), center-based child care, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten programs. There is a tendency to focus attention on preparation of early childhood workers in the more formal care settings, such as center care, Head Start and pre-kindergarten. Yet recent data on the proportion of children in home-based child care underscores the importance of encompassing all early childhood settings in discussions of professional development and training.

- *The need for clear and agreed-upon definitions of professional development and training.* There is a lack of consensus at present as to definitions, and especially the meaningful differentiations that need to be made in discussing the extent of professional development and training. For example, as currently used in research, the term "training" can refer to a single workshop lasting several hours or a carefully designed multi-session sequence focusing on a number of different topics. This lack of clarity and agreement in defining and operationalizing professional development is creating problems in looking across studies to summarize findings and identify implications.

- *The need to go beyond discussions of extent of professional development and training, to examination of the content of the training.* At present the research focuses almost completely on levels or extent of professional development and training. Perhaps a more important issue in preparing children for school is consideration of the nature or content of that training. Focusing on the content of professional development and training raises a new set of issues. States are beginning to articulate early learning guidelines, for example in the area of early literacy. How does the content of current training and education relate to expectations for the specific knowledge and skills of children entering kindergarten in such areas? What models exist for caregiver and teacher education in specific aspects of school readiness, including different components of cognitive development (e.g., early mathematical concepts), but going beyond these to include social development as well (e.g., self-regulation).

- *The need for education and training approaches to focus directly on demonstration of behaviors in interactions with children rather than (or in addition to) acquisition of information in the classroom.* New approaches to professional development and training seek to provide feedback directly on behavior in the classroom, rather than focusing on mastery of information presented in a course. Adaptations exist for providing such feedback in rural settings through two way video-conferencing. New research is in process focusing on the effectiveness of such approaches.

- *A need to focus on the costs and benefits of differing approaches to the education and training of early childhood caregivers and educators.* Cost-benefit analysis has been applied to closely related issues (such as the issue of long term effects of early childhood interventions), but not to the issue of professional development of the early childhood care and education workforce. What can be learned from the work in closely-related fields in order to assess the costs of differing education and training approaches, and to measure the ratio of such costs to immediate and longer-term benefits and savings? Differing education/training strategies likely differ in terms of cost (as for example, the difference in cost for a workshop vs. courses for an AA degree). Is the benefit to children proportional?

Structure of the Meeting

Introductory comments to the meeting as a whole were given by SEED consortium members Martha Moorehouse (ASPE/DHHS) and V. Jeffery Evans (NICHD). Their comments focused on the reasons that the issue of professional development and training in the early childhood workforce is emerging as central across federal agencies, and the clear need to move research in this area forward. Martha Moorehouse noted the importance of early childhood professional development in a policy context that includes the Administration's Good Start Grow Smart Initiative, the reauthorization of both Head Start and the Child Care and Development Fund, and an increasing emphasis on coordination across state agencies focusing on early childhood. Jeff Evans underscored the importance of professional development and training as it applies across multiple sectors of early childhood care and education. He also noted the need for an interdisciplinary approach to the issue, including not only the developmental and education research traditions, but also economics.

Martha Zaslow (Child Trends), who had worked with the SEED partners to develop and then implement the meeting plan, noted that the structure for the meeting emerged out of multiple planning sessions by the SEED consortium members. These meetings identified five topics as needing to be addressed. The meeting was organized around these five topics:

Topic 1: Defining and describing professional development and training
Topic 2: Designing models for professional development and training

Topic 3: Linking professional development and training to the quality of the early childhood environment and to child outcomes
Topic 4: Costs and benefits of increasing professional development and training
Topic 5: Setting a course for further research

Different SEED consortium members served as moderators for the presentations and discussions of each session. The moderators started each session with a brief overview of the key issues for the topic.

Stephanie Curenton (Child Care Bureau) moderated the first topic, Naomi Karp (Department of Education) moderated the second, Kyle Snow (NICHD)served as moderator for the third topic, V. Jeffery Evans (NICHD) served in this capacity for the fourth topic, and Ivelisse Martinez-Beck (Child Care Bureau) guided the discussion concerning further research in the final topic. Papers from the meeting will be available to the field as an edited book in 2004.

Topic 1: Defining and describing professional development and training

Presentation # 1: How are professional development and training defined and measured in research? An overview. *Kelly Maxwell, Richard Clifford and Cathie Feild (Frank Porter Graham Center, University of North Carolina)*
This presentation summarized findings from a review of definitions for professional development and training currently being used in major studies of early care and education settings. Findings indicate a lack of clarity as to the key distinctions that are important to make as well as a lack of consensus across studies. For example, different studies will use the heading training for brief workshops or sequences of coursework resulting in a credential. Highest level of education may be described without respect to the content of the education. This paper pointed to the need for common definitions that can be applied across the range of early care and education settings, including home-based settings.

Presentation #2: Describing the early childhood workforce in terms of professional development and training. *Ivelisse Martinez-Beck (Child Care Bureau); Louisa Tarullo (Head Start Bureau); Helen Raikes (University of Nebraska); and Richard Brandon (University of Washington)*
This presentation began by placing the early childhood workforce in context by describing it as a proportion of the overall workforce involved in education. This approach underscores the importance of early childhood educators. Looking within the early care and education workforce, it is clear that there are distinct groups or "sectors," and furthermore, given their prevalence, that home-based care providers cannot be overlooked. Within this framework, the presentation used available data to provide a descriptive picture of the level of education and training for four sectors in the early education workforce: those in center care, home-based care, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten programs. The presentation ended with a discussion of new evidence from the Midwest Child Care Research Consortium raising the possibility that we may need to

go beyond education and training to consider a wider range of "assets" that early care and educational workers may have, including, for example, years of experience in the early childhood workforce. New analyses raise the possibility that the number of such assets, rather than the presence of specific assets, may best predict quality of the environment. There may be aspects of preparation or background that complement or can substitute for education and training.

Presentation #3: Going beyond traditional measures to direct observation of behavior in the classroom as an approach to measuring and enhancing professional development. *Robert Pianta (University of Virginia)*
This presentation noted that we currently use three "C"s as proxies professional development: courses, credentials, and curriculum or materials. Yet classroom observations show an extraordinary amount of variation in the quality of early childhood environments, and loose rather than tight and systematic associations with these three Cs. The presentation argued for organizing professional development directly around observed teacher-child interaction in early childhood environments. Re-designing professional development with a direct focus on the quality of interactions as the goal (rather than credentials, completion of courses, or implementation of particular curricula) would involve the development of a common language for describing interactions and development of measures that would work across early childhood and elementary school settings. The presentation argued for regular assessment of classroom practices and not just of children. A model for ongoing and individualized feedback regarding classroom interactions was described (along with the possibility of doing this via distance learning).

Topic 2: Designing models for professional development and training

Presentation #1: Content of professional development and training for the early childhood workforce. Getting from there to here to there: NAEYC's standards for early childhood professional preparation. *Marilou Hyson (NAEYC).*
This presentation described NAEYC's Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation, and discussed how these can be used to move from "there" (a confused vision of the content for early childhood professional preparation) to "here" (the implementation of a clearly articulated set of expectations for what teachers should know and be able to do). Since 1980, NAEYC has had guidelines for what well-prepared teachers should know and be able to do. These guidelines were revised in 2001 based on (1) the changing knowledge base in the field of early childhood; (2) input from experts and stakeholders; and (3) a goal to place particular emphasis on competencies expected, rather than on credits or coursework expected. This presentation gave an overview of each of the five categories of standards for early childhood professional preparation, and the basis on which each has been further developed or modified. It discussed how the NAEYC Standards are being implemented and the challenges to implementation. At present, about 110 four-year teacher preparation programs have been approved by NAEYC as meeting the standards. The process of application is a meaningful source of information for reviewing and revising course content: about half of the programs that apply are approved upon initial application, but a substantial number are approved upon reapplication. Separate but related standards for community college programs are currently being revised.

Presentation #2: Alignment in early childhood preparation: A case example of reading pedagogy in Ohio. *Kathleen Roskos (Ohio Literacy Initiative, Ohio Department of Education).*
States are now being encouraged to articulate objectives for early learning and to indicate how these align with goals for learning during elementary school. As they articulate the specific content standards for what children should learn, both before and after the transition to

elementary school, states are also asking whether educator preparation aligns with the content standards for children's learning. This presentation gave a case study from the state of Ohio, examining the alignment (and in some instances misalignment) of early educator preparation in the area of literacy with the state's content standards for early literacy development in children. The literacy content in a sample of CDA programs, AA programs and BA/BS programs was examined in light of the knowledge and skill expectations for early childhood educators in this domain. While in some instances there is good congruence across course content and these expectations, in other instances correspondence is lacking. Such an examination of alignment/misalignment in light of clearly articulated goals for early learning and early educator skills can be used to refine the content of early educator preparation.

Topic 3: Linking professional development and training to the quality of the early childhood environment and to child outcomes.

Presentation #1: Professional development/training and quality of early care and education environments. *Kathryn Tout, Daniel Berry, and Martha Zaslow (Child Trends).*
A fairly substantial body of research exists examining the linkages between professional development/training and the quality of the early care and education environment. This research focuses on extent or level of training, with little attention to content. Further, this research is burdened by the definitional difficulties noted in the presentation by Maxwell and colleagues, with different studies making different cutpoints in terms of educational level, and defining training in very different ways. It is also not always clear what the underlying assumptions are about *how* education and training might be expected to be linked to the quality of the environment, for example, whether one should expect *overall* quality to be better at higher levels of education and training, or whether specific aspects of care should improve (such as verbal interactions) when education or training are more extensive. Given the lack of both definitional and theoretical clarity, it is perhaps not surprising that the degree of agreement across studies is not as great as might be expected. Nevertheless, there are patterns in the evidence showing broadly that higher levels of education with child development-related content are associated with better quality environments particularly in center care.

Presentation #2: The role of preschool classrooms in supporting early literacy development. *David K. Dickinson (Boston College)*
This presentation turned from consideration of level of education and training to the nature of such preparation, focusing specifically on professional development regarding early literacy development. The presentation reviewed evidence indicating that characteristics of early childhood classrooms can support children's early literacy development. While the evidence points to a strong role for the home environment and child characteristics, it also consistently supports the view that such features of classrooms as extended teacher discourse help to explain children's language and literacy development. The presentation then turned to the evidence on professional development strategies to bolster early literacy practices and child development in this area, showing substantial changes in the environment and smaller but nevertheless significant changes in measures of development with the implementation of such strategies. Approaches examined to date to strengthen early literacy practices support the potential importance of working jointly with teachers and supervisors, and of including applied/practice components in training.

Presentation #3: Helping professionals to promote early childhood mathematics education. *Herbert P. Ginsburg (Teachers College, Columbia University)*

Most students preparing to work in early childhood care and education receive little preparation in the area of early mathematics development, and indeed courses to help early childhood educations prepare in this area cannot be widely found. A dilemma exists in that math skills quickly become central in elementary school, yet there is concern that introducing math content as part of early childhood education is a form of downward academic pressure. Yet at the same time, the evidence suggests that free play provides little support for the development of math skills. This presentation provided preliminary indications that an approach involving the provision of "artful guidance" for building early mathematical thinking and skills can support the development of concepts as well as skills; develop both informal and formal math; and involve activities that are engaging and fun. The presentation described a set of in-service training workshops for early childhood supervisors and teachers that builds from existing knowledge of how children learn early mathematical concepts and skills. With this strategy still in the early stages of implementation, the presentation concluded with plans for research evaluating the effectiveness of the training.

Presentation #4: Cognitive and social-emotional self-regulation. *Elena Bodrova (McREL; National Institute for Early Education Research) and Deborah J. Leong (Metropolitan State College; National Institute for Early Education Research)*
This presentation turned to another specific content area of potential importance for the early care and education workforce: fostering children's self regulation. *Cognitive* self-regulation involves such activities as control of attention, planning and monitoring of thinking and problem-solving strategies. *Social-emotional* self-regulation involves the capacity to delay gratification, to monitor one's own behavior, internalize standards of behavior, and to inhibit and control impulses. Evidence suggests that high levels of self-regulation are associated with measures of achievement in both early and later childhood, as well as with social competence and positive peer relations. The ability to self-regulate is also a high priority of teachers, who frequently express concern over classroom management and acting-out behavior in children. Further, classroom environment and teacher behavior have been shown to relate to children's self-regulation. Few interventions have focused on strategies teachers can use to foster self-regulation for a whole class rather than focusing on individual children showing problem behaviors, and very few have focused on the early childhood period. This presentation described such an intervention, taking a Vygotskian approach that emphasizes children's engagement in scaffolding interactions with teachers, and regular practice of specific interactions with peers as well as teachers. The presentation described the early phases of an evaluation of this intervention.

Topic 4: Costs and benefits of increasing professional development and training

Presentation #1: Professional development in early education: Directions for benefit-cost research. *W. Steven Barnett (National Institute for Early Education Research)*
There is, at present, no body of research weighing the benefits and costs of different approaches to professional development in early childhood care and education. Indeed a literature search identified only a handful of published studies. This paper noted that guidance for how to build such a literature can come from related research. For example, the work on early childhood intervention (evaluations of such programs as High Scope and the Abecedarian project) can be used to identify initial and longer term outcomes that could be examined in children in relation to costs (for example, longer-term outcomes might include school drop-out, crime and delinquency). To help move towards informative and rigorous work in this area, the presentation distinguished among several types of studies that could be carried out and the requirements of such studies. For example, cost analysis, examining the expenditures needed for different approaches to professional development, was distinguished from feasibility analysis, or an examination of how

large effects and benefits would need to be to justify the costs. The paper noted the need for randomized trials on the effects of different forms of professional development.

Presentation #2: Evaluating early childhood professional development programs: Accounting for spillover effects and market interventions. *Elizabeth Peters (Cornell University)*

Professional development can be addressed <u>directly</u>, through regulating minimum standards for training and education, or <u>indirectly</u>, through market interventions that have the potential to make obtaining further education or training more desirable. This presentation focused on the potential of market interventions to have "spillover effects" on early educator professional development by affecting parents' demand for quality. An intervention in the state of New York was described as a case study currently being evaluated for such spillover effects. The Child Care Programs of Excellence initiative involves rating child care quality in five New York State counties, providing Programs of Excellence designations for high quality programs and educating parents about the ratings and how to use them in selecting child care. One of the components of the rating system is the education and training level of the educators in the settings. The potential exists, and is being examined, that informing parents about the ratings could result in increased demand for high quality child care, which in turn could lead child care settings to increase the professional development required of workers.

Topic 5: Setting a course for further research

Presentation #1: Development of a research agenda to ensure children's successful transitions to school. *Sharon Landesman Ramey and Craig T. Ramey (Georgetown University Center on Health and Education)*

The concluding presentation focused on the development of a research agenda on professional development of the early care and education workforce. This presentation noted key features of mature fields of scientific inquiry that should be incorporated into new research efforts focusing on this issue, including: (1) strong nomenclature and classification, (2) insistence on rigorous research designs; (3) strategies to integrate across different levels of investigation (for example, methodological research, qualitative studies, monitoring and descriptive studies, and randomized controlled trials); (4) replication and vigorous re-analysis and reflection; (5) timely exchange of major findings; (6) development of a cumulative, common knowledge base; and (7) application of research to practice.