Good Learning Environments for Children: 10 Things I Think I Know

Dale C. Farran, PhD
Peabody Research Institute
Peabody College/Vanderbilt University
National Head Start Association
May 2, 2013
The Current Context

WHY YOUR WORK IS MORE AND MORE IMPORTANT
Change in Average Net Worth by Age Group, 1983-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Change in Net Worth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-28</td>
<td>+5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29-37</td>
<td>-21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-46</td>
<td>+26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47-55</td>
<td>+76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-64</td>
<td>+120%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-73</td>
<td>+79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 or older</td>
<td>+149%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wealth Inequality in the US 1983-2010

Figure 1. Wealth Inequality among U.S. Families Is Increasing

Notes: All values are presented in 2010 dollars, and data are weighted using SCF weights. Shaded areas indicate recessions.
### Assessing Educational Well Being Across Industrialized Countries, UNICEF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENTS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Preschool participation rate (% of those aged between 4 years and the start of compulsory education who are enrolled in preschool)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Further education participation rate (% of those aged 15 to 19 enrolled in further education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NEET rate (% aged 15 to 19 not in education, employment or training)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Average score in PISA tests of reading, maths, and science literacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dimension 3 Educational well-being

Findings

» Educational well-being is seen to be highest in Belgium, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands – each of which achieves an overall score significantly above average for the 29 countries.

» Greece, Romania, Spain and the United States show the lowest levels of educational well-being.
NO RICH CHILD LEFT BEHIND

BY SEAN F. REARDON
THE PROBLEM HEAD START CLASSROOMS ARE TRYING TO ADDRESS:

POSITIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR CHILDREN IN ADVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES (TOXIC STRESS)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACE Category*</th>
<th>Women (N = 9,367)</th>
<th>Men (N = 7,970)</th>
<th>Total (N = 17,337)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abuse (#abuse)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse (#1)</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse (#2)</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse (#3)</td>
<td>24.7</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neglect (#neglect)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Neglect (#4)</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Neglect (#5)</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Dysfunction (#dysfunction)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Treated Violently (#6)</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Substance Abuse (#7)</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Mental Illness (#8)</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Separation or Divorce (#9)</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarcerated Household Member (#10)</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Adverse Childhood Experiences Pyramid

Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

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10 Things that are important

TO CREATE CLASSROOMS FOR CHILDREN FROM HIGH STRESS BACKGROUNDS
1. More Positive Tone in the Classroom – More Smiling
Teacher Instruction WITH Positive Emotion Linked to Gains in Skills

Teacher Environment
• Instructional level
• Emotional tone

Child Academic Gains
• Literacy
• Math
Vibrant!
2. Approve behavior more, disapprove behavior less
Teacher Classroom Behaviors

Type of Task

- Behavior: Approving: 2%
- Behavior: Disapproving: 15%
- Social: 3%
- None: 1%

Level of Instruction

- High Inference: 1%
- Some Inference: 7%
- Basic Skills: 10%
- Low: 8%
- None: 3%

Instruction & Assessment: 28%
Managing: 50%
Relations Between Behavior Approving and Disapproving and Child Gains

- **Less** behavior disapproving by teacher linked to gains in **achievement**.
- **More** behavior approving by teacher linked to gains in **self regulation**
- **Fewer** behavior reminders to entire class linked to gains in **self regulation**.
3. Make More Math Happen
Relations Between Experiences with Math and Child Gains

- The more *children* are engaged with math, the greater the gain in self regulation
  - Children must have opportunities to be engaged with math materials in addition to teacher-led instruction
    - Center materials
    - Small groups
    - Math included in everyday activities like transitions
4. Classrooms and centers must be organized and inviting
Children in Disorganized Classrooms

- Are more susceptible to behavior problems and aggressive behavior
- Have more competitive interactions with other children
- Engage in less play
- Have less positive social interaction and more solitary play
- Have higher stress levels
Disorganized Centers Will Not Lead to Productive Play, Development of Attention
5. Increased Center Time
Centers/Free Play

- 45-60 minutes
- Adequate number of well-stocked and organized centers to allow children to move freely and independently
- Rotate materials for interest
- Good for
  - Concentration/focus
  - Practicing skills
  - Peer interactions
  - Verbalizations with peers
- Not as good for
  - Verbal interactions with teachers
  - Skill directed learning

Farran, May, 2013, National Head Start Association
Farran, May, 2013,
National Head Start Association
6. Classrooms must be places where interesting things happen and children are engaged
Child engagement and gains in skills

- **Teacher Environment**
  - Instructional level
  - Emotional tone

- **Child Engagement**

- **Child Academic Gains**
  - Literacy
  - Math

- **Child Self Regulation Gains**
Child Engagement Related to Gains in Achievement and Self Regulation

1. Overall engagement level of the children in the whole class
   – During all activities
   – During math and literacy activities in particular

2. Engagement levels of individual children
   – During math and literacy
   – During activities that are more complex (requiring more steps to carry out)
7. Reduce transitions

8. Stay in the room
Total Time in Learning Opportunities Across the Full Pre-K Day

Proportion of Time Spent in Preschool Activities

- Whole Group: 17%
- Small Group: 4%
- Small Group Centers: 4%
- Centers: 14%
- Transition: 13%
- Meal, Nap, Out: 48%
Transitions and Learning Opportunities (in the room) Linked to Gains in Achievement

- Strategies to reduce the number and length of transitions can be learned. Professional development can be focused on this one issue.
- Staying in the room reduces the number of “script” changes children have to be responsible for.
  - Bathrooms in hall
  - Meals out of room
  - “Specials”
9. Reduce “Training” lessons and concentrate more on learning
Training Children Not the Goal

• Less Management Required When --
  – Children are engaged and interested in the activities
  – Materials are ready and children do not have to wait between activities

• The more management teachers do, the more they have to do

• Extensive management interrupts activities and interferes with children’s concentration

• In general classrooms need many fewer rules
10. Teachers should talk less and listen more ... to children
Teacher Verbal Behavior
(Talk by teacher during morning learning opportunity)

Teacher Talking and To Whom

- Not Talking or Listening: 20%
- Listening: 9%
- Talking: 71%
  - To Child: 35%
  - To Small Group: 7%
  - To Whole Group: 25%
  - To Self: 1%
  - To Parent/External Adult: 1%
  - To Teacher: 2%
Opportunities to Listen to Children

- Not likely in whole group time
- Hard to do well in center time
  - Happens if teacher does not interrupt child’s activity
  - Teacher makes herself available by crouching low and watching what child is doing and then responding to overtures
- Small group time should be a good opportunity
  - Our data show that teachers talk as much in small groups as they do in whole group
  - Teachers have to practice waiting for children
How to Create These Classrooms

• All 10 things are not *curriculum* dependent
• They can happen with whatever curriculum the teacher is using
• They are actually much harder to change
• Extensive and sustained professional development is required.
FINAL WORDS

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE TEACHER

• Respect for Children
• Joy in Children’s Behavior
• Viewing Children’s Learning as an Intellectual Puzzle
Discussion

E-mail: dale.farran@vanderbilt.edu
http://peabody.vanderbilt.edu/pri.xml

Peabody Research Institute
Vanderbilt University
Box 0181 GPC, 230 Appleton Place
Nashville, TN 37203-5721
USA