



LOVE OF LEARNING IN THE TIME OF COVID

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No, this is not a play on the title of Gabriel Garcia Marquez' Nobel Prize winning book, *Love in the time of Cholera*. (Although, like the book, delivering early childhood education in the time of Covid has certainly had its share of twists and turns!) It's just an attempt to remind us of the importance of reading and staying abreast of the research in our field to best serve children and families. It is also a reminder that amidst unprecedented uncertainties, our critical work will move forward during this difficult year and hopefully transport us to a deeper understanding of the importance of, among other things, our own health and its place in the important field of early childhood education. So take a break, sit back and relax, and enjoy some research (and research-to-practice) from scholars working in our field.

As we enthusiastically bid farewell to the unusual year of 2020 with somewhat desperate hopes of a return to anything resembling "normal" in the coming year, we are pleased to produce this Winter issue of the NHSA Dialog. Heartfelt thanks to my co-Editor, Dr. Pamela Shue, my Managing Editor, Bryndle Bottoms, and all of our manuscript reviewers for trudging forward through uncertain times with positive attitudes to help publish three different issues of the journal this year while simultaneously learning how to teach online, how to learn online, and how to generally "live" virtually as productively as possible, albeit from "home." This new lifestyle (almost entirely online) has been a first for many of us!

Our Winter journal issue is still presented in its familiar format containing eight articles for your reading and learning pleasure; Four research articles followed by four research-to-practice articles by the same authors with a focus on practice. We open with *The Transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten: Parent, Teacher, and Administrator Perspectives* by Dr. Virginia Vitiello of the University of Virginia. Vitiello recruited parents, teachers, and administrators engaged in a larger, longitudinal study to focus in on the range of transition practices from pre-k to kindergarten, as well as investigating uniformity within the use of those practices. She interviewed 9 administrators (3 from the school district, 3 from centers, and 3 elementary school principals) in addition to 10 preschool teachers, 13 kindergarten teachers, and 10 parents of preschoolers to gather data. She gleaned 3 important themes from her data collection. It may come as no surprise to many of us that one theme was "much of the energy, enthusiasm, and sense of responsibility for children's successful transitions was borne by preschool, rather than elementary school, administrators, teachers, and parents." This really hit home with your editors from our studies in North Carolina in the last decade (Shore, Shue, & Lambert, 2010; Bish, Shore, & Shue, 2011, and Shue, Shore, & Lambert 2013) through which we found elementary principals felt sorely lacking in background knowledge for welcoming pre-k to their schools, even though they did, indeed welcome them. Vitiello also found that there was more emphasis on the "mechanics" of the transition than on



actual “readiness” skills for children, and that there were issues of concern around lack of alignment of curriculum between the pre-k experiences and their kindergarten curriculum.

This last theme from Vitiello’s work made for a natural transition to our second research article, *An Investigation of the Curricula (and Quality) of Early Childhood Educators*. This article shares results of a study by Dr. Rachel Schachter and Dr. Laura Justice, both at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, in collaboration with Dr. Shayne Piasta of The Ohio State University. Their work addresses the challenges faced when trying to identify a common definition of curriculum across the field of early childhood education. Their extensive review of literature led them to articulate 7 key features of quality. Their large pool of almost 500 participants resulted in another large pool of 35 different curricula being used. Dive in!

Our third research article is a case study focused on one particular government-funded preschool classroom in an economically under-resourced community to answer the research question, “How do required policies and protocols reflect and shape effective classroom interactions?” In their 8-week qualitative case study, Dr. Coleen Whittingham of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and Dr. Emily Brown Hoffman of Ball State University investigate the bidirectional influences of the macrosystems on the microsystem. Their research involved interviews, fieldnotes, artifacts, employee handbooks, parent communications, classroom curricula and even videotape, to consider the origins of the policies witnessed in practice. Read their research to learn about Triangle teachers in a Triangle classroom.

Our final research article by Dr. Rebecca Shearer-Bulotsky, Christine F. Delgado, Jhonelle Bailey, Jenna N. Futterer & Rinatte L. Gruen of the University of Miami is titled *Examination of Children Referred and Identified with Socioemotional and Behavioral Needs in Head Start*. This important work examined the prevalence of children identified with disabilities in a large urban Head Start program serving diverse preschool children living in poverty. From a sample of over 7,300 preschool children, their findings suggest that gender (boys) and ethnicity (Hispanic) were associated with higher rates of identification for disability, including emotional/behavioral disability. This work further highlights that early identification is crucial so that “early intervention and support can be provided within the classroom and home setting, to improve children’s adaptive behavior and positive engagement in formative learning experiences that set the stage for future school and life success.”

In closing, we hope to have fed your love of learning by presenting something new about teaching, learning, Head Start, and the field of early childhood education. We also extend a reminder to always take precautions for yourself to stay safe, all the while we *know* you are keeping our children safe, developing, and thriving - whether in-person or through a screen. When educators learn, it’s almost assured that students will learn (Brunsek,, Perlman, et al, 2020) and school outcomes will improve (Shore, Lambert, & Shue, 2020). We hope that you will have some creative and productive new thoughts as you dive into this last issue of the NHSA Dialog for 2020.



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