



FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

# STP-PreK UPDATES

**FIU**

 Center for  
Children and  
Families

**Winter-Spring 2016**

IN THIS ISSUE

**CURRENT AND UPCOMING EVENTS**

## What's new @ FIU?

By Drs. Paulo Graziano and Katie Hart

Over the last 5 years of the STP-PreK, grants through the Department of Education's Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) and the Children's Trust has allowed us to:

- ❖ Provide intervention services to **232 families** in our community.
- ❖ Provide training to **over 100** teachers, counselors, and therapists

In this newsletter, we wanted to share with you some of our findings from the research you have helped create.

- 1) Effectiveness of the STP-PreK
- 2) Importance of children's self-control skills
- 3) Importance of children's relationships with their teachers for promoting academic success
- 4) Importance of practicing the skills you learned in the parenting program of the STP-PreK

We are currently completing our last round of 1<sup>st</sup> grade follow-up evaluations. **So if you were in the STP-PreK or received School Consultation Services in 2014, please come see us!** Remember we need your help to continue receiving funding for this great program and to make it as low cost as possible for families. Call our coordinator Paola Mondino at:

**(305) 348-1833**

[Summer Program Dates](#)

**Summer Treatment Program for Pre-Kindergartners (STP Pre-K)**  
6/20/2016 – 8/12/2016

**Summer Program for Autism in Rising Kindergartners (SPARK)**  
6/20/2016 – 8/12/2016

**Healthy-Lifestyle Intervention Program (HIP)**  
6/20/2016 – 8/12/2016

**\*We will begin receiving calls for interested families starting in mid-February so spread the word\***

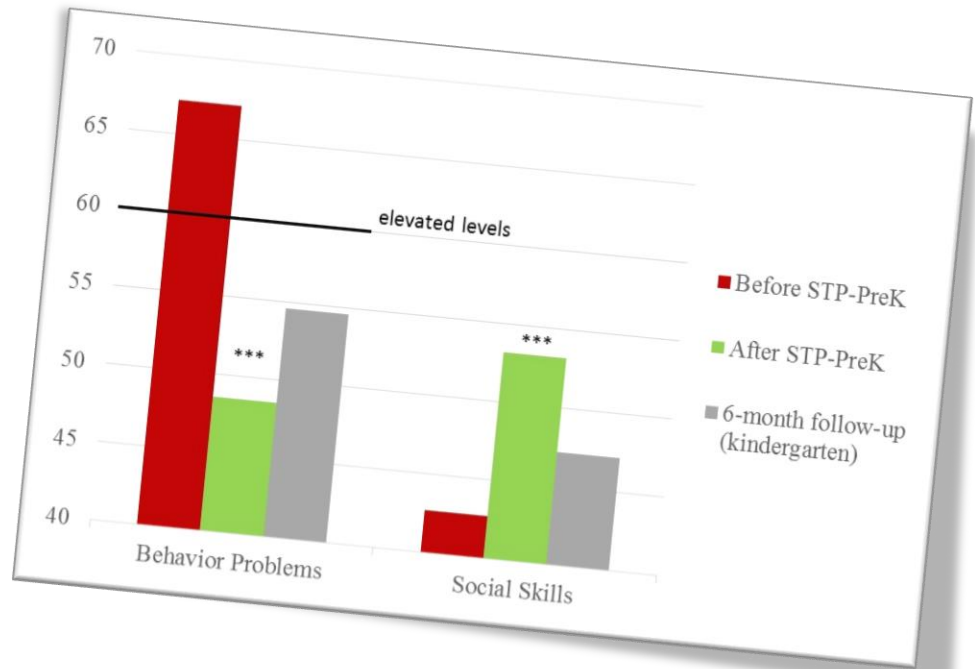
## Effectiveness of the STP-PreK

The kindergarten environment is markedly different from that of preschool, such that in kindergarten, children must adapt to an ecological system that expects them to accomplish numerous academic and social goals under decreased supervision due to increased class size and increased emphasis on autonomy. The novel demands of kindergarten, in combination with a decrease in support offered in preschool, require children to use their self-control skills to control their attention, behavior, and emotions.

These demands present a challenge for many young children. For example, a large national survey found that up to 46% of kindergarten teachers indicated that half of their class or more had difficulties with self-control skills (e.g., following directions, staying on task, paying attention) and were not emotionally and socially competent to function productively and learn.

The summer treatment program for pre-kindergarteners (STP-PreK) was designed to facilitate this transition to kindergarten, especially for young displaying behavioral and attentional difficulties.

This study examined a) the feasibility of delivering the STP-PreK and b) the extent to which the STP-PreK was effective in improving children's school readiness outcomes.



### FAST FACTS

96% camp attendance

92% parent training attendance

97% of parents indicated that both them and their child and benefited from the STP-PreK

99% of parents highly recommended the STP-PreK to other parents

96% of parents felt that the STP-PreK was highly effective in changing their child's problems

In terms of outcomes, as seen above in the graph, children experienced **large improvements** that **were maintained 6-months into kindergarten** in terms of

- ❖ Reducing behavior problems
- ❖ Improving social skills
- ❖ Improving emotion regulation skills
- ❖ Improving academic functioning

### PUBLICATION

Graziano, P., Slavec, J., Hart, K., Garcia, A., & Pelham, W. (2014). Improving school readiness in preschoolers with behavior problems: Results from a summer treatment program. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 36(4), 555-569.

## Importance of children's self-control skills

"Self-regulation" refers to the skills and processes associated with the direction, planning, and control of attention, cognition, emotion, and action. Traditionally, self-regulation has included aspects of behavioral regulation, including delaying gratification, modulating arousal, and following instructions.

Successful "self-regulation" or self-control skills allows children to succeed in the classroom environment. For example, children must be able to attend to teacher instructions despite a distracting classroom environment.

Good self-control skills and higher order thinking skills referred to as executive functioning enables children to remember classroom rules while participating in activities as well as inhibiting an automatic response (e.g., raising hand instead of shouting an answer).

This study examined the validity and clinical utility of a brief self-regulation assessment (Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders; HTKS) among a preschool children with behavioral/attentional difficulties.

Self-control measures included parent and teacher reports of children's executive functioning (EF), four working memory tasks, and children's self-regulation performance during the STP-PreK.



### FAST FACTS

Children who performed well on the HTKS were 47% more likely to exhibit good self-control skills in the classroom during the STP-PreK

Children who performed well on the HTKS were 30% more likely to be rated by their teachers as being ready for kindergarten

Children's self-control skills contributed to 30% of their reading scores

Children's self-control skills contributed to 42% of their math scores

#### Parent tip #1

Continue to promote your child's self-control skills by playing games that require them to stop and think and listen to tricky directions (e.g., Red Light Green Light, Simon Says).

#### Parent tip #2

Continue to promote your child's self-control skills by being consistent with your commands and discipline practices. Only repeat your commands once as it will force your child to have to listen to you more attentively (provided of course you have consequence for the child not listening to you; time-out, loss of privilege).

#### Publication

Graziano, P., Slavec, J., Ros, R., Garb, L., Hart, K., & Garcia, A. (2015). Self-regulation assessment among preschoolers with externalizing problems. *Psychological Assessment*. Advance online publication

## Importance of children's relationship with their teacher for promoting academic success



The quality of children's relationships with their teachers has become increasingly recognized as an important predictor of children's early school adjustment and academic success. The effects of the student-teacher relationship quality on children's school outcomes also appear to be long lasting as studies show that the student-teacher relationship quality during kindergarten significantly predicted behavioral and academic indicators of school readiness through eighth grade.

In particular, student-teacher closeness is associated with better performance and more favorable attitudes toward school. On the other hand, a student-teacher relationship characterized by conflict is associated with negative academic and behavioral outcomes. Lastly, the effects of a positive or negative student-teacher relationship on children's academic functioning and engagement is particularly important for children who are academically at-risk and from disadvantaged economic backgrounds.

This study examined the role of the student-teacher relationship in predicting preschoolers with behavioral and/or attentional difficulties' school readiness.

### FAST FACTS

Children with positive relationships with their teachers were 20% more likely to be rated as being ready for kindergarten

Children with poor relationships with their teachers were 29% more likely to have academic problems in their classrooms.

Children with poor self-control skills were only more likely to have academic problems if they also had a poor relationship with their teachers

### Parent tip #3

Building a positive relationship with your child's teacher and school is essential to ensuring the transition to kindergarten is a positive one. Remember to build regular home-school communication into your school routine. Use that communication to reinforce your child's school behavior at home. A positive approach to learning and school starts at home!

### Publication

Graziano, P., Garb, L., Ros, R., Hart, K., & Garcia, A. (2015). Executive Functioning and School Readiness among Preschoolers with Externalizing Problems: The Moderating Role of the Student-Teacher Relationship. *Early Education and Development*, 1-17.

# Importance of Practicing the Skills you learned in the Parenting Program of the STP-PreK



Parenting programs often assign homework in an effort to help parents learn and practice new positive parenting skills. Studies show that completing parenting homework is a good predictor of whether children's behavior and parenting skills will improve after completing behavioral intervention programs.

While completing parenting homework assignments is essential to ensure improvements after the parenting group, an important component of practicing is also parents' knowledge of the parenting skills.

Studies show that parents who complete parenting programs not only have better knowledge about positive parenting skills but also feel more confident in their own parenting techniques.

This study examined whether parental homework completion and knowledge gains about parenting skills were more important than session attendance for predicting improvement in parenting practices and parenting confidence.

## FAST FACTS

Parents who completed the parenting program had:

- ✓ increases in positive parenting skills
- ✓ decreases in negative parenting skills
- ✓ better knowledge of parenting skills

Parents who practiced skills at home with their child more often were **41% more confident in using the skills** than parents just attending sessions

Completing parenting homework assignments was most effective for families that demonstrated good understanding of the parenting skills

### Parent tip #4

Continue to practice the special time skills you learned with your child. Practicing 5 minutes a day can have lasting impacts on your child's behavior and your own confidence as a parent.

Remember that "Do" skills include: praising, reflecting, imitating, describing, and most importantly, Enthusiasm!

### Publication

Ros, R., Graziano, P., & Hart, K. (2016). Examining Components of Parent Training: Parental Homework Completion and Treatment Knowledge during Group PCIT. Manuscript invited for resubmission *Journal of Early Intervention*.

# Message from the Directors

Dear Families,

The important work you have been reading about in this newsletter would not be possible without you and your family. But we also can't forget to thank the incredible team of students and trainees who have come to train with us over the last 5 years, as well as your children's teachers and schools. Working with and getting to know you all has been a true blessing and joy to us!

It is hard to believe that we are embarking upon our 7<sup>th</sup> summer program here in South Florida! Our program is expanding in several ways this summer thanks again to your commitment to our programs and our generous funders, The Children's Trust and The Institute of Education Sciences. Near our main FIU campus, we will hold our 8-week STP-PreK comprehensive school readiness program for three classrooms young children with behavior problems. New this year, we will be adding two classrooms devoted to preparing children with high functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders for kindergarten. Five classrooms in all! Additionally, we are very excited to announce that we will be working with Thena Crowder Early Childhood Diagnostic and Special Education Center in Liberty City this summer to provide comprehensive school readiness programming for two classrooms young children who are receiving, or eligible to receive, services through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for moderate-to-severe learning and/or behavioral needs. We have a busy summer ahead of us, but we are looking forward to expanding our program's reach and can't wait to share the results with you!

As we've said, this work would not be possible without you! We are currently conducting our first-grade follow-up for all the families enrolled in our 2014 IES programs. 2014 families, we know you all have very busy schedules and it is hard to find time to come back out to FIU, but your feedback and participation in our program and our research studies is vital to our program's continued success. You matter to us and to all the future families who will benefit from the work we are doing at FIU. If coming out to FIU is too much of a burden on your family, we can come to your home or your child's school. Please call us, if you haven't already, to schedule your appointment. Hope to hear from you soon!

On another note, some families have contacted us to let us know that there have been new or continuing issues since we last saw you. Remember that our center has a wide range of services for elementary-age children, including the Summer Treatment Program for children in elementary grades. Another summer may be just what you and your child need to get back on track. Our center also has a number of parenting programs, both group and individual, if you need an extra boost on what you learned in your time with us. Many other evidence-based intervention and treatment options are available. To find out more about available programming, please visit our center's website or call us anytime.

Finally, we hope that you know we are here for you. All of our phone numbers are listed below. If you have a question at any time, we are happy to do our best to problem-solve and connect you with the resources you, your child, and your family needs to be healthy and well.

Warmest Regards & Sincerest Thanks,

Dr. Hart & Dr. Graziano

## STP-PreK Team

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