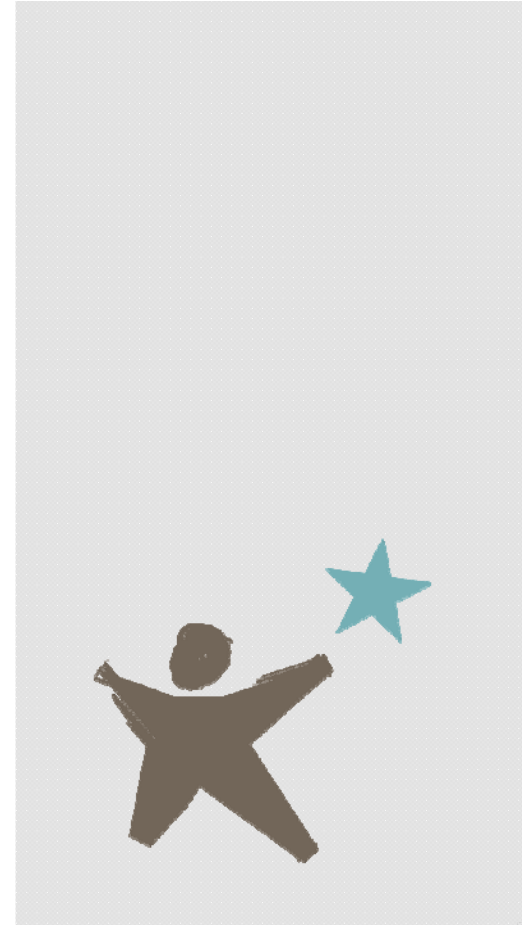


Family Engagement and Partnerships in Rural Communities: Challenges and Benefits in Early Intervention

Susan M. Sheridan, PhD

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Research Team:

- Lisa L. Knoche
- Carolyn Pope Edwards
- Christine A. Marvin
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Methodologists:

- James Bovaird
- Houston Lester
- Kevin Kupzyk

Assistants/Key Personnel:

- Brandy Clarke
- Keely Cline
- Courtney Boise
- Amanda Moen
- Sandra Scruggs

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Context Matters: Realities for Families in Rural Communities



Poverty

- Deep poverty for rural children has spiked in recent years relative to urban
- Rural families lag behind non-rural in income and education

Access to services

- Geographic isolation
- Limited availability and quality

Differential exposure to effective parenting

- Relative gaps in literacy, language, math skills at school entry
- Delays in behavioral and social-emotional skills



The 'Psyche' of Rural: Assets and Challenges

- Priority on family and *relationships*
- Strong sense of *community*
- Stability

- Distrust
- Stigma
- Multi-generation, multiple relationships



Why Families?

Why
Partnerships?

- Major contributor in child's development
- Potential resource in resource poor settings
- Empirical support



Relationships Between Settings:

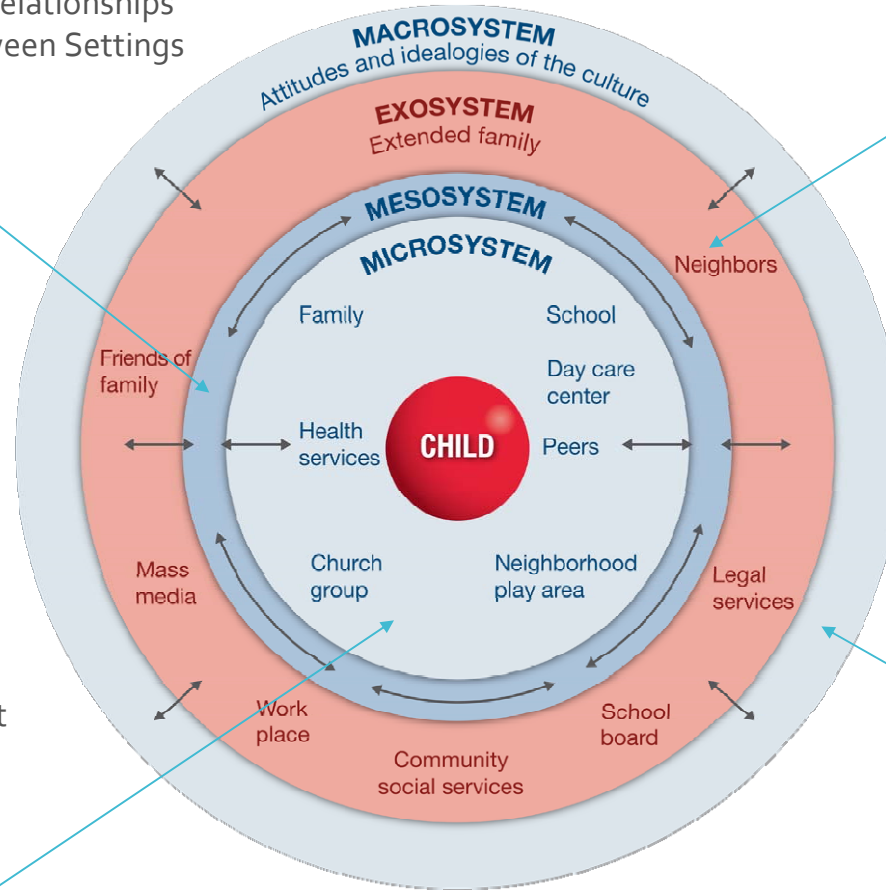
- Home-School Connections
- Parent-Teacher Relationships
- Continuities between Settings

Community:

- Rural/Urban
- Resources/ Opportunities
- Community Engagement

Experiences Within Settings:

- Families
- Parent Engagement
- Parent-Child Interactions
- Teacher-Child Relationships



Policies/Culture:

- Political Context
- Economy
- Values/ Ideologies

The Influence of Rurality and Parental Affect on Kindergarten Children's Social and Behavioral Functioning

Sheridan et al. (2014),
EED, 25, 1057-1082.

1. Does living in a rural community influence kindergarten children's social-behavioral skills (i.e., social skills, externalizing behaviors)?
2. Does living in a rural community influence parents' affective behaviors (i.e., emotional supportiveness, negative regard, intrusiveness, detachment) during preschool?
3. Do parents' affective behaviors during preschool mediate the relationship between geographic setting and social-behavioral skills in kindergarten?

The Influence of Rurality and Parental Affect on Kindergarten Children's Social and Behavioral Functioning

Relative to Non-rural:

Rural children's social-behavioral functioning

- Rural parents reported higher levels of externalizing behaviors (e.g., aggression, impulsivity) in their children.

Rural parents' affective behaviors

- Rural parents exhibited less emotional support in preschool.

Relationship between rural parents' affective behaviors and children's social-behavioral functioning

- Preschool parenting behaviors were associated with social skills and behavior problems in kindergarten.
- Parents' emotional supportiveness accounted for the relationship between geographic setting and children's social skills; rural parents who provided less emotional support had children with lower social skills in kindergarten.

Family Partnership Interventions in Rural Communities

- Couched in relationships
 - Child is at the center
 - High priority on relationships between parents and children
 - High priority on relationships rather than distinct roles among adults who share responsibility for child
- Grounded in critical elements within rural contexts
 - Trust-building, mutual respect, bi-directional communication, joint planning
- Goal is to leverage human capital on behalf of a young child's learning and development
 - Strengths in numbers and networks, particularly when access and quality are limited





Getting Ready Intervention: Definition

A *partnership approach* to child and family school readiness that promotes children's learning and development by *strengthening relationships, building competencies, and promoting collaboration* among families and early childhood educators.

Getting Ready Intervention

A *flexible and responsive method* for engaging and interacting with families across *structured* and *unstructured intervention contexts*

NOT a curricular program or standardized protocol... Rather, a *set of strategies* for strengthening relationships and building competencies



Getting Ready:

*Strategies for
Strengthening
Relationships*

Along with parents, ECEs:

- Communicate openly and clearly
- Establish parent–child interaction
- Affirm competencies
- Encourage mutuality in decision making



Getting Ready:

*Strategies for
Building
Competencies*

Along with parents, ECEs:

- Focus attention on child strengths
- Share information and resources
- Use observations and data to guide decisions
- Model and suggest



Putting it
Together:
*Collaborating
as Partners*

In structured interactions:

- Share Observations and Strengths
- Set Goal(s)
- Determine Steps
- Share Ideas and Develop a Home-School Plan
- Monitor/Modify





Results of a
Randomized Trial of a
Relationship-focused
Intervention on
Parent Engagement
in Rural EHS
Knoche et al. (2012),
IMHJ, 33, 439–458



- Investigated efficacy of Getting Ready for parent–infant relationship for families involved in rural EHS home-based programming
- Assessed parental warmth & sensitivity, support for autonomy, and participation in learning as a function of Getting Ready, relative to comparison group

Setting and Early Childhood Professionals

Research Context:

Three Early Head Start programs in Central US

Rural communities highly agricultural and industrial

Home-based services; 60-90 minutes per week

| Early Childhood Educator/Home Visitor Demographic Characteristics (N = 64) | |
|--|---|
| Mean Age | 31.9 (SD= 9.4) |
| Mean years in EC | 5.2 (SD = 4.9) |
| Mean years in current employment | 2.0 (SD = 3.6) |
| Highest Level of Education | 37% high school diploma 8% one-year vocational training certificate 37% two-year college degree 18% four-year college degree |
| Ethnicity | 39% Hispanic/Latina 61% Non-Hispanic/Latina |



Participant Characteristics



| Parent Characteristics at Baseline (n = 230) | |
|--|---|
| Mean Age | 24.75 (SD= 5.38) Range 12 - 49 |
| Adults in the Home | 25.2% two or more 74.7% one |
| Employment Status | 43.2% Employed 56.8% Unemployed |
| Highest Level of Education | 41.5% less than high school 54.5% high school diploma 2.6% two-year college degree 1.3% four-year college degree |
| Ethnicity/Race | 33.6% Hispanic/Latina 62.9% White |

| Child Characteristics at Baseline (n = 234) | |
|---|--|
| Mean Age | 10.30 months (SD= 6.5) Range 1.8 – 24.5 |
| Gender | 51.7% Male 48.3% Female |
| Identified Disability | 5.7% |
| Language at Home | 69.5% English 25.2% Spanish |
| Ethnicity/Race | 39.5% Hispanic/Latina 53.9% White |

Parent/ Caregiver Involvement Scale

(Farran, Kasari, Comfort,
& Jay, 1986)



Eleven categories of parent behavior were rated across three dimensions:

Quality ▪ *Appropriateness* ▪ *Amount*

Confirmatory factor analyses were performed with the *Getting Ready* sample at baseline

Supported a model with three factors for *quality* items (CFI=.971, RMSEA=.052), two factors for *appropriateness* items (CFI=.947, RMSEA=.065), and one factor for *amount* items (CFI=.978, RMSEA=.076).



Parent/ Caregiver Involvement Scale

(Farran, Kasari, Comfort,
& Jay, 1986)

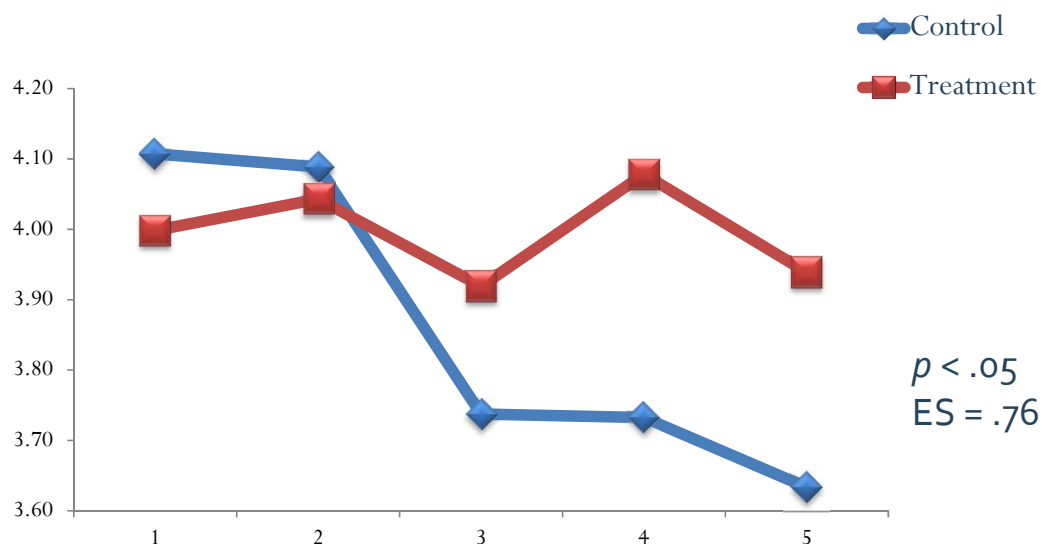
| Quality | Appropriateness | Amount |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>Warmth & Sensitivity*</i> | <i>Support for Learning*</i> | <i>Constructive Behaviors</i> |
| <i>Support for Learning</i> | <i>Guidance/Directives*</i> | |
| <i>Encouragement of Autonomy*</i> | | |

Experimental Design

- Participants assigned to treatment or control condition based on home visitor assignment
- Multilevel modeling used to test univariate growth curves among dependent variables with $\alpha = .05$
- 4-level complex sampling design



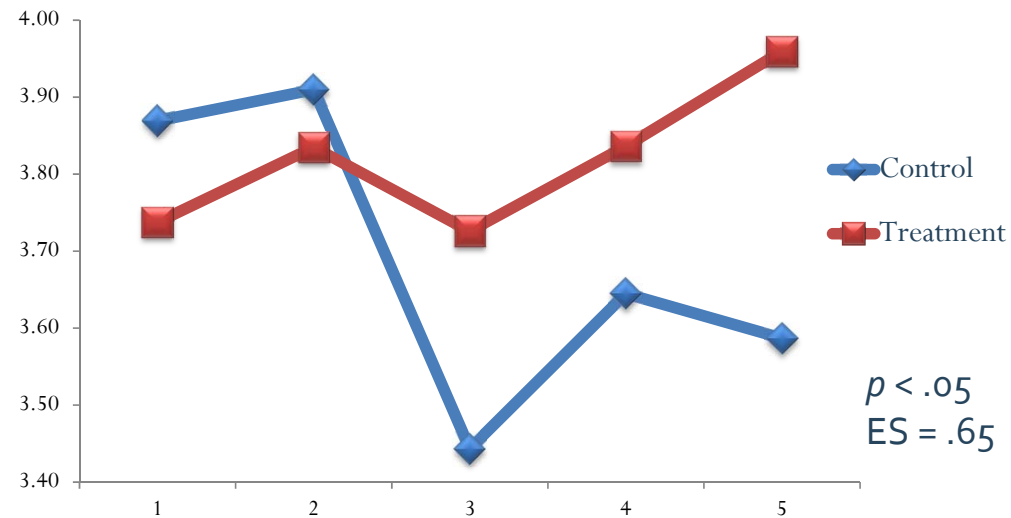
Quality of Parental Warmth & Sensitivity



Parents in the Getting Ready treatment group interacted with their children using a ***greater degree of high quality warmth and sensitivity*** than their counterparts in the control condition. They demonstrated high-quality, positive, sensitive interactions with their children.



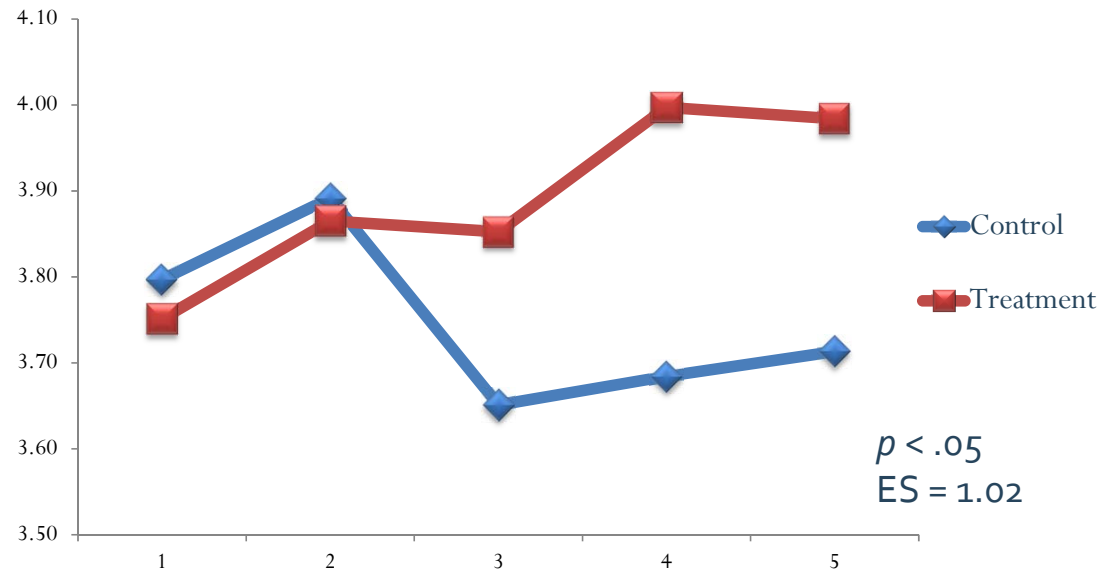
Quality of Parental Encouragement of Child's Autonomy



Compared to parents in the control condition, parents who were involved in the Getting Ready intervention demonstrated **more high quality skills to support their children's autonomy**. That is, parents involved in the intervention were sensitive to the types of goals they set for their children, and used quality approaches to control children's activities.



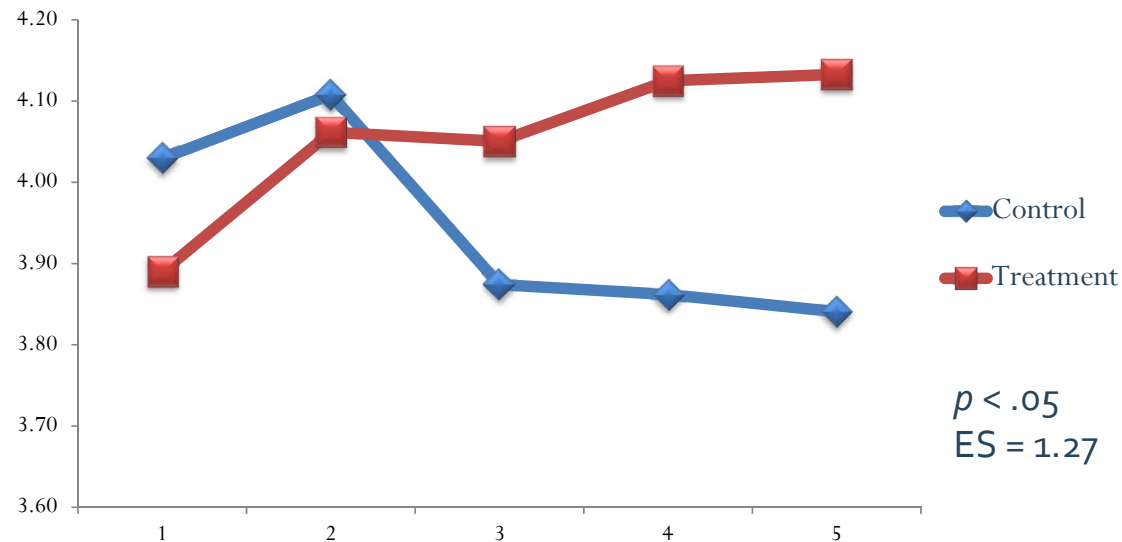
Appropriateness of Parental Support for Learning



Parents in the treatment group provided more *appropriate supports for their children's learning* than parents in the control group. Parents in the treatment group provided fitting supports for their children, including appropriate teaching behaviors, verbal interactions and responsiveness.



Appropriateness of Positive Guidance & Directives



Parents in the treatment group were observed to provide *more appropriate guidance and directives for their children* than the parents in the control group. The behaviors used by these families to direct their children's behaviors were well-matched to the children's developmental level, interest and needs.

Getting Ready “Fit” in Rural America

- Relationship-strengthening strategies used by ECEs may effectively address challenges unique to rural settings:
 - small communities, perceptions and attitudes of participants based on generational histories
- Increased trust and positive attitudes occur as a result of:
 - frequent contact, constructive problem solving, mutual input toward solutions, individual roles and responsibilities, and clear and open communication



Getting Ready “Fit” in Rural America

- Competence-building strategies used by ECEs may effectively address challenges unique to rural settings
 - Limited availability of specialized services, few resources for and limited access to specialized services
- Increased capacity for supporting children’s learning in natural settings
- Long-term role constructs and parental self-efficacy for participating in children’s learning experiences



Thank You!

Susan M. Sheridan, PhD

Director, Nebraska Center for Research on
Children, Youth, Families and Schools

www.cyfs.unl.edu

ssheridan2@unl.edu

