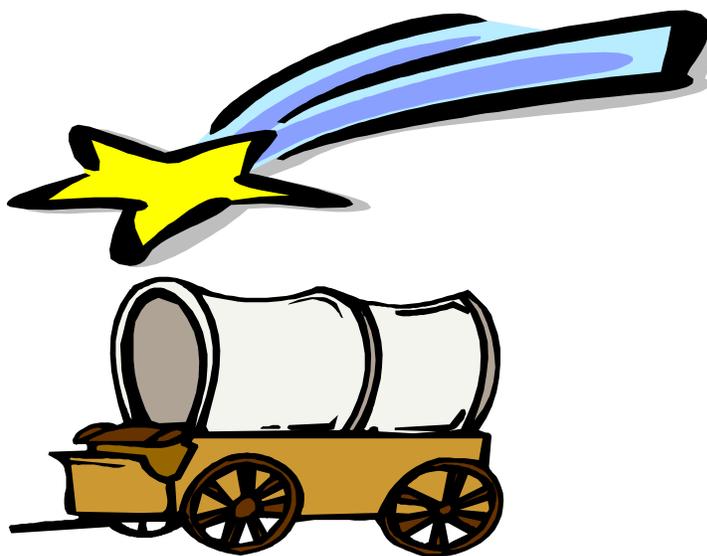




FALL 2004

SECA REPORTER



*“Hitch Your Wagon to a Star.... A
Voice for Southern Children”*

Join us in Dallas, Texas, on March 3-5, 2005 for the 56th Annual
Conference of the Southern Early Childhood Association!

Call 1-800-305-SECA for more information or go to
www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org.

SECA 2005—A Chance to Show Your Star Power!

It's hard to believe, but it's almost conference time again! We're looking forward to seeing all of you in Dallas and we have a wonderful conference planned for you.

Conference registration materials were mailed last month but you can get them right at your fingertips by going to www.SouthernEarlyChildhood.org. A registration form is on the home page and you can find all the conference agendas, schedules and a full registration brochure on the "conference" page of the website.

Some highlights of SECA 2005!

- Our **keynote speakers** include Al Stewart, Sharon MacDonald, Madelyn Swift, William Raspberry and Dr. Cathy Grace.
- Our **public policy and leadership day** on Thursday will focus on the issue of childhood obesity. It's an epidemic that's sweeping our country and early childhood educators are particularly positioned to affect the health and well-being of children. A schedule for the day is posted on the website.
- The **Disney Channel** is joining us at SECA and will be providing gifts for each participant as well as underwriting lunch for conference participants on Saturday.
- If you are **interested in becoming a trainer**, we have a special workshop for you on Thursday. *Training 101* will give you all the tools you need to be a good trainer and successful business person.
- The **Director's Seminar** is designed just for administrators, and we've got some excellent opportunities for directors to network and share.
- The **High-Scope Foundation** is joining SECA as a conference partner and will provide a full-day workshop *FREE* on Thursday.
- **Lakeshore Learning** is providing a model classroom at the conference and we'll have guides to help you move through the classroom and match the classroom equipment and design to standards.

This is only a brief idea of what we have planned for you. There's much, much more and we'll look forward to seeing you next March!

Letter from the Executive Director

We're approaching the end of another year and it's certainly had opportunities and challenges.

For many of us in the South, this year has meant the departure of loved ones for far away places and, for some families, the loss of those loved ones. Early childhood educators have helped children cope with absent parents, fears and loss.

We've been challenged by Mother Nature and Florida continues to build back from a series of damaging hurricanes that pounded the state for several weeks. Texans have floated their way to work many mornings because of flash floods, and we've seen more rain in the last couple of months than we usually see in a year.

The resiliency of our people continues to amaze me. When I was in Florida for their state conference in September, I flew into Orlando and looked down on blue tarp after blue tarp---stopgap measures to cover holes in roofs that were damaged by the hurricane. What I found in Florida was an upbeat and humorous perspective on life and its challenges.

In Pensacola, the child care centers were banding together to bring children into centers that hadn't sustained damage so that families could function, and neighbors were pulling together to share food, tools and other necessities. (Who

needs refrigeration when you can share a meal?!)

Our Association has faced its challenges this year and is ending the year as a strong and viable organization that is dedicated to assisting the professionals in our field and supporting our families and their children.

SECA has a special role to play in our region by supporting the professional growth and development of those who care for and teach our children. We're making the changes necessary to ensure that SECA continues the mission begun over 50 years ago, and we know that our impact on your professional life will continue to grow.

To all our members, thank you for your support during the last year. However you celebrate this time of year, it's a time of celebration for the gifts you've been given in 2004, a time to renew your spirit with friends and loved ones and a time to look forward to the opportunities that 2005 will bring. Best wishes for a wonderful holiday season!

Glenda Bean

Interested in Public Policy?

Go to the *Public Policy Page* on our website to get the latest information on trends that affect children in the South. If you need to contact your legislator, click on *The SECA States*, choose your state, click on *Advocacy Contacts*, click on the e-mail address and send your message. You'll also find lots of info that's just about the SECA region.

Cutbacks in State Assistance

The National Women’s Law Center has released a report, *Child Care Assistance Policies 2001-2004: Families Struggling to Move Forward, States Going Backward*.

This report contains an analysis of state child assistance policies and reveals that states are cutting back child care assistance programs although the number of families living below the poverty line is increasing. Some of the findings include:

- Between 2001-2004, the **income ceiling** for families to qualify for assistance has declined as a percentage of poverty in about three-fifths of the states.
- Between 2001-2004, families with one child and living at 150% of the poverty level had an **increased child care cost burden** in about half of the states. States contributed to this by increasing copayments for families or lowering its income cutoff so that many families lost eligibility for assistance.

- During these years, the number of states with an **inadequate or outdated system of reimbursement rates** for child care providers rose from 29-37.

For a copy of this report, go to <http://www.nwlc.org/pdf/ChildCareSubsidyFinalReport.pdf>

Lifetime Effects: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Project-- Age 40 Results

No scientific study has received more attention and prominence than the High/Scope Perry Preschool Project. The study and research project has been utilized throughout the United States and the world to define and focus the benefits of early childhood education.

The study examines the lives of 123 African Americans born in poverty and at high-risk of failing in school. From 1962-1967, at ages 3 & 4, the children were divided into two groups. One group received a high quality pre-school program based on High/Scope’s learning approaches and the other group received no preschool program.

High/Scope Cont'd

The original research verified that the quality preschool program had benefits in terms of increased school success, adult productivity and benefits to society.

In the study's most recent phase, 97% of the study participants still living were interviewed at age 40. Additional data were gathered from the subjects' school, social services and arrest records. The study found that adults at age 40 who had the preschool program had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool.

The study has produced eight monographs over the years. The findings of program effects through age 40 span the domains of education, economic performance, crime, family relationships and health.

For a summary of the report, go to www.highscope.org.

The High Scope Foundation will present a full day workshop entitled, *Looking for Literacy in Preschool Classes....What You Should See, What You Should Hear*, at SECA 2005. Check the website, conference page, for more information.

Healthy Virginians

On November 18, 2004, Governor Mark R. Warner launched the second component of his *Healthy Virginians* initiative. This component focuses on improving school lunch and breakfast options, encouraging healthier school vending machine offerings and promoting increased physical exercise for Virginia's school children.

Governor Warner launched the *Healthy Virginians* initiative in November starting with efforts to promote healthy lifestyles among the state workforce. The third component of the initiative will focus on healthier lifestyles for Medicaid recipients.

In launching the second component, Governor Warner stated, "I believe our public schools must play an active role in addressing the alarming increase in cases of overweight and obese children and the negative health effects that we all know will result from poor nutrition and a lack of exercise."

This component contains two strategies:

- ❖ *Governor's Nutrition and Physical Activity Scorecard*
- ❖ *School Breakfast Funding*.

For more information, go to www.governor.virginia.gov.

TRUCE Toy Action Guide Available

TRUCE, Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment, is a national group of educators that is deeply concerned about the impact of children's entertainment and toys on the play and behavior of children in our classrooms.

To assist educators and parents in making decisions about toys and media for their children, *TRUCE* has issued a Toy Action Guide that outlines criteria to use in making selections.

The group recommends that these criteria be considered when making choices:

Toys have enhanced play value when they...

- ✓ Can be used in many ways.
- ✓ Allow children to determine the play.
- ✓ Appeal to children at more than one age or level of development.
- ✓ Are not linked to video games, TV or movies.
- ✓ Can be used with other toys for new and more complex play.
- ✓ Will stand the test of time and continue to be part of play as children develop new interests and skills.
- ✓ Promote respectful, non-stereotyped, non-violent interactions among children.
- ✓ Help children develop skills important for further learning and a sense of mastery.

To access the Toy Action Guide which includes a parent guide, list of recommended toys, a list of toys and toy trends to avoid and how to make "shoe box gifts", go to www.truceteachers.org.

Thank You, Thank You! A Letter to Infant & Toddler Teachers and Caregivers

Dear Mr. Billings:

What a wonderful day I had when visiting your center! Thank you for letting me spend the day in my granddaughter's room. I not only had an enjoyable day, but I *really* learned a lot! You know from our previous conversation that I only had a week to visit my daughter and her family before I had to return to our farm in Ohio. I wanted to see the center where my precious grandchild was staying while my daughter and son-in-law are at work. I just could not imagine my little Angela would get the attention she needs while in group care. My visit proved me wrong! The infant teachers are fantastic. Let me tell you about my visit.

I guess, to be honest, I went to the center with a negative attitude about infant child care. I think that was because I had no understanding of what it was like. I just had in my mind the images of center care I have seen during news reports, and most of these were unfavorable. When I arrived with my daughter and Angela, we were greeted

Thank You cont'd

just like we were part of the center family! The infant teacher talked to my daughter, called Angela by name, and she seemed to really care about our baby. When my daughter left and I stayed to visit, I was treated so kindly that I felt right at home.

The first thing I noticed about the room was the cleanliness and pleasant smell. There were no diaper odors and the room was not only very clean but orderly and attractive. I was surprised to see colorful pictures on the floor and walls for infants to enjoy. How thoughtful!

As I watched the infant teacher, Miss Ashley, I asked her how she knew so much about each one of the babies. She explained to me that she is the primary caregiver for four infants, including my Angela. While I was there, I saw how she also helped care for the babies assigned to Miss Peggy when needed. There was a real atmosphere of team work as the teachers diapered, fed and cared for the children. Miss Ashley explained to me that by being Angela's primary caregiver, she had the opportunity to get to know Angela well, including her eating and sleeping habits, and her temperament traits. She also was able to talk to my daughter everyday so they could share thoughts, concerns and happenings with each other.

When it came time for Angela's feeding, I would have gladly taken over this responsibility, but I wanted to see how

they did it at the center. Was I ever surprised to see Angela being held and talked to, just like I would do! While feeding Angela her bottle, Miss Ashley held her in her arms and talked softly to her as they looked lovingly at each other. Miss Ashley smiled at my baby and began to sing softly. It brought tears to my eyes! When Angela was sleeping, I saw the teachers giving each of the babies the same loving, individual care.

My biggest change of attitude came as I learned the importance of the diapering routine. I raised four children and I *don't remember diaper changing as a wonderful time of the day!* But now I know it is one of the important parts of the infant curriculum at the center. Miss Ashley explained to me how diapering time allows her to spend quality one-on-one time with each baby assigned to her. I watched her go over to Angela and say, "Angela, I am going to pick you up and change your diaper now. Then you will feel *so much* better. Come on, angel!" Angela looked up at her with a trusting look and a smile. The whole time she was changing the diaper, she explained to Angela what she was going to do and she looked her in the eye and smiled at my baby! They both seemed to *enjoy* these few minutes together! By then, I had lots of questions for the teacher. Why did she tell Angela what she was doing every step of the way? Why didn't she just give the baby a toy to keep her occupied while she quickly changed the diaper? Why did she spend so much time at this routine task?

Well, Miss Angela patiently answered ALL my questions and did I ever get a new perspective on diapering. She told me that by telling the children she was going to pick them up, before she even touched them, she was showing them they were important *people*, not just objects to be quickly taken for a routine change. By talking about each step in the process, she was teaching my baby language and increasing cognitive skills! I sure never thought of that! But the part I will never forget is when she asked me how I would feel if I were in a nursing home and had to wear diapers. How would I want to be treated when it was time for a change? Suddenly I saw the importance of being told what is going to happen, the eye contact, the slow, gentle process! How lucky my baby is to have a caregiver like Miss Ashley!

But that's not all. I could not believe how the teachers took time to read books to the children, sing songs with them and even dance with them. What fun! Miss Ashley explained to me how she carefully lets Angela do the physical activities she is able to at the time but the teachers never try to hurry her development by practicing skills she has not yet achieved on her own. She explained to me how important it is for the babies to have time on the floor to play and move about. I wondered why there were no infant swings. Now I knew. The teachers planned and prepared a room in which the babies could develop at their individual pace with encouragement and joy but no pressure to hurry and grow-up! When my daughter came to pick up Angela and me, I was tired and happy.

In fact, I think I was the happiest grandmother in the whole state. My special granddaughter was loved and cared for by a teacher that knew about child development and how to provide the care that would allow my Angela to grow into a healthy, happy, trusting toddler. How can I ever thank you and your teachers enough for the wonderful care and services your center provides! Thank you, thank you, thank you.

You have made a difference, not only in the lives of my granddaughter and daughter, but now you have changed the thinking of this grandmother too. I would never have believed that infant center care could be so wonderful. Please share this thank you letter with ALL the infant teachers and let them know how much they are appreciated and needed. From the bottom of my heart, I send my love and best wishes to you.

Angela's Grandmother
Mrs. Janie Gilpin

Did you see yourself here?! This article was prepared by Nancy Jane Cheshire, Associate Professor & Early Childhood Coordinator, Fairmont State Community & Technical College in Fairmont, WV. Nancy directs the lab school at Fairmont State. See if you can find all the exemplary practices included in this article!

Check out SECA's position on *Quality Child Care* for more information. You can download a copy of the statement on our website by clicking on the *Position Statements* button on the home page.

