MSU professor leads development of early literacy video, booklet; distribution to 20,000 Michigan licensed child care providers

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June 19, 2006

EAST LANSING, Mich. - It's never too early to read to a child. And now Michigan policymakers and MSU literacy experts are teaming up to promote reading to our youngest citizens in child care settings.

The Promoting Emergent Literacy in Licensed Care Project, led by Nell Duke, has produced a DVD and 20-page booklet designed to help educate licensed child care center staff to improve children's learning experiences from birth through five years of age.

The video and booklet will be presented to Michigan Department of Human Services Director Marianne Udow on Monday, June 19, 2006 at 11:00 a.m. at EC3 - Educational Child Care Center, 1715 W. Main Street, Lansing, for distribution to 20,000 licensed child care providers across Michigan.

The effort is a result of groundbreaking State of Michigan policy that requires all licensed child care centers to include at least 30 minutes daily of developmentally appropriate literacy activities. Typically, child care requirements have focused on issues of safety and staffing, rather than curriculum.

Duke, associate director of MSU's Literacy Achievement Research Center and an associate professor in the College of Education, narrates the video which features video clips and photographs from child care settings throughout Michigan, along with short commentary clips by early childhood literacy experts, child care providers, and Governor Jennifer Granholm.

"One of the challenges was to help child care providers understand ways to foster emergent literacy development – for 30 minutes and beyond. How do you introduce books to infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers? How do you make print a part of everything from mealtimes to pretend play? First steps were to identify age-appropriate literacy activities and ways to include them in daily activity – we then used that research base as a foundation for the video," Duke said. "We also showed the video to teachers and early childhood experts during various stages of project development and used their feedback in making adjustments."
The Michigan Department of Human Services will distribute the video and booklet through the Child Day Care Licensing Division.

"Children learn more from birth to age three than any other time in life," said Michigan Department of Human Services director Marianne Udow. "As our knowledge and understanding of brain development continues to grow, the critical connection to the quality of young children's emotional relationships becomes even more apparent. Our challenge is to act on this knowledge to ensure that every child born in Michigan reaches kindergarten with the intellectual and emotional foundation necessary to help him or her succeed in school."

Several groups have expressed interest in using the materials for training sessions, and the project team is now developing and testing a training module for this purpose. Individuals from several other states have also expressed interest in using the video, which will be made available for sale at cost through the Literacy Achievement Research Center Web site, www.msularc.org

Multi-disciplinary efforts and external partner collaborations contributed to successful project implementation. Duke was joined by four collaborating authors: Annie M. Moses, Alison K. Billman, Shenglan Zhang, and V. Susan Bennett-Armistead, all of Michigan State University.

Project development funding sources include MSU Families and Communities Together (FACT) Coalition; MSU Literacy Achievement Research Center (LARC); MSU School of Social Work; W.K. Kellogg Foundation; and the Child Day Care Licensing Division of the Michigan Department of Human Services.

"Outreach enriches and sustains the intellectual vitality of scholarship throughout the campus and beyond," Hiram Fitzgerald, Associate Provost for University Outreach and Engagement, said. "This project touches all three aspects of engaged scholarship through teaching, research, and service and demonstrates the value of community collaboration. Nell Duke provides an outstanding example of faculty outreach and engagement performance."

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