



[2020]  
*impact report*



**THE OHIO STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

CRANE CENTER FOR  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
RESEARCH AND POLICY



**THE OHIO STATE  
UNIVERSITY**

SCHOENBAUM FAMILY CENTER

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[01]

*introductory thoughts*

**The rapid and all-consuming changes brought on by COVID-19 have led to major shifts, successes and challenges in our work across 2020, and there is so much we want to share with you. And yet, there is little we can write that will capture the most profound or meaningful moments from the past 12 months.**

We may remember 2020 as the year that more people began to recognize the role of research scientists to advance findings and solutions that keep us safe.

We might remember it as the year that early care and education took on increased importance, as millions of families became their children's teachers and full-time caregivers overnight – often while juggling their own jobs. If we didn't already realize just how difficult and important the working of caring and teaching is, 2020 was a reckoning of sorts.

We may reflect on 2020 as a time when so many societal systems broke down, leaving families and young children without the supports they needed.

This year we sanitized a lot; had more screen-based social interactions than ever before; and remembered that the roles of schools and early education and care programs are as much about rich social interactions as they are about reading or math. It was a year when a child's basic ability to see a grandparent took on new prominence, and a time when we were asked to make sacrifices despite not knowing when the light at the end of the tunnel was coming.

The year 2020 created new research questions, like: How does mask-wearing impact a baby's or toddler's ability to discern speech or emotion on a caregiver's face? Or, how can remote learning best be delivered for tens of millions of children? It also underscored the urgency of questions that researchers already were asking, like: How does stress impact caregivers and therefore their children, and how can we mitigate it?

The year 2020 introduced new policy priorities, too, especially with respect to investing in early childhood systems and other family-focused policies, so we can become more resilient to disruptions like a pandemic. We also must face, collectively, the serious impact of racism on young children and the insidious ways in which it steals their potential. And, we must acknowledge that so many children and families are facing great financial distress and grappling with basic needs like hunger, a great paradox for one of the world's wealthiest economies.

Despite all of this, 2020 renewed our commitment in the Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy and the Schoenbaum Family Center (Crane/SFC) to continually work to improve the well-being of young children in our community and across the globe. As the late Marian Wright Edelman said, "If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much." This year has underscored that fact in sometimes shocking or difficult ways. The urgency of our work in Crane/SFC has grown, as have the needs of the children and families we see every day. Our solace comes from knowing that we are not alone. There are a growing number of partners in this work – those who advance research, teaching, service and advocacy for children – and a growing number of everyday people who know that the wellness of any society is bound inextricably to how well it treats its youngest citizens.

It is with a spirit of gratitude and hope that we thank you for your partnership, your voice, and your shared vision, and offer these 2020 updates and highlights from across the year at Crane/SFC. ■





[02]

*a quick look:  
our 2020 impact by the numbers*






**5 FACULTY FELLOWS**  
with center appointments

**27 FACULTY AFFILIATES**  
from 14 departments across  
3 Ohio State campuses



**181 children**  
received well-child checks  
and dental screenings through  
our Early Head Start Program

**[880]**

**Ohio-approved continuing  
education units issued to  
early childhood educators**

(required for licensing  
and ongoing professional  
development)



**15 countries**  
engaged in Crane Center  
research collaborations




**75**  
peer-reviewed research  
articles published




**100 central Ohio children**  
participated in  
**Summer Success at Home**  
(a kindergarten readiness program  
adapted for virtual learning)



**6 teachers**  
became virtual Summer  
Success educators  
during pandemic closure of  
A. Sophie Rogers School



**46 weekly**  
**Tuned-In newsletters**  
curating and analyzing policy-  
specific news and information to  
help keep you well-informed





## 4 NEWLY CREATED VIRTUAL EVENTS

in response to the pandemic



11 new grant awards totaling \$8,440,336



72 OSU undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral scholars worked or volunteered with our programs and researchers



1 comprehensive infant/toddler early literacy curriculum developed



5 ELECTED OFFICIALS presented their take on pressing policy matters at Crane/SFC events



2,791 citations

of Crane research in scholarly publications



of parents rated the quality of Summer Success at Home as "excellent"

[1556]

EVENT REGISTRANTS

from as far and wide as Australia, Brazil, Indonesia, Netherlands, South Korea, and Turkey

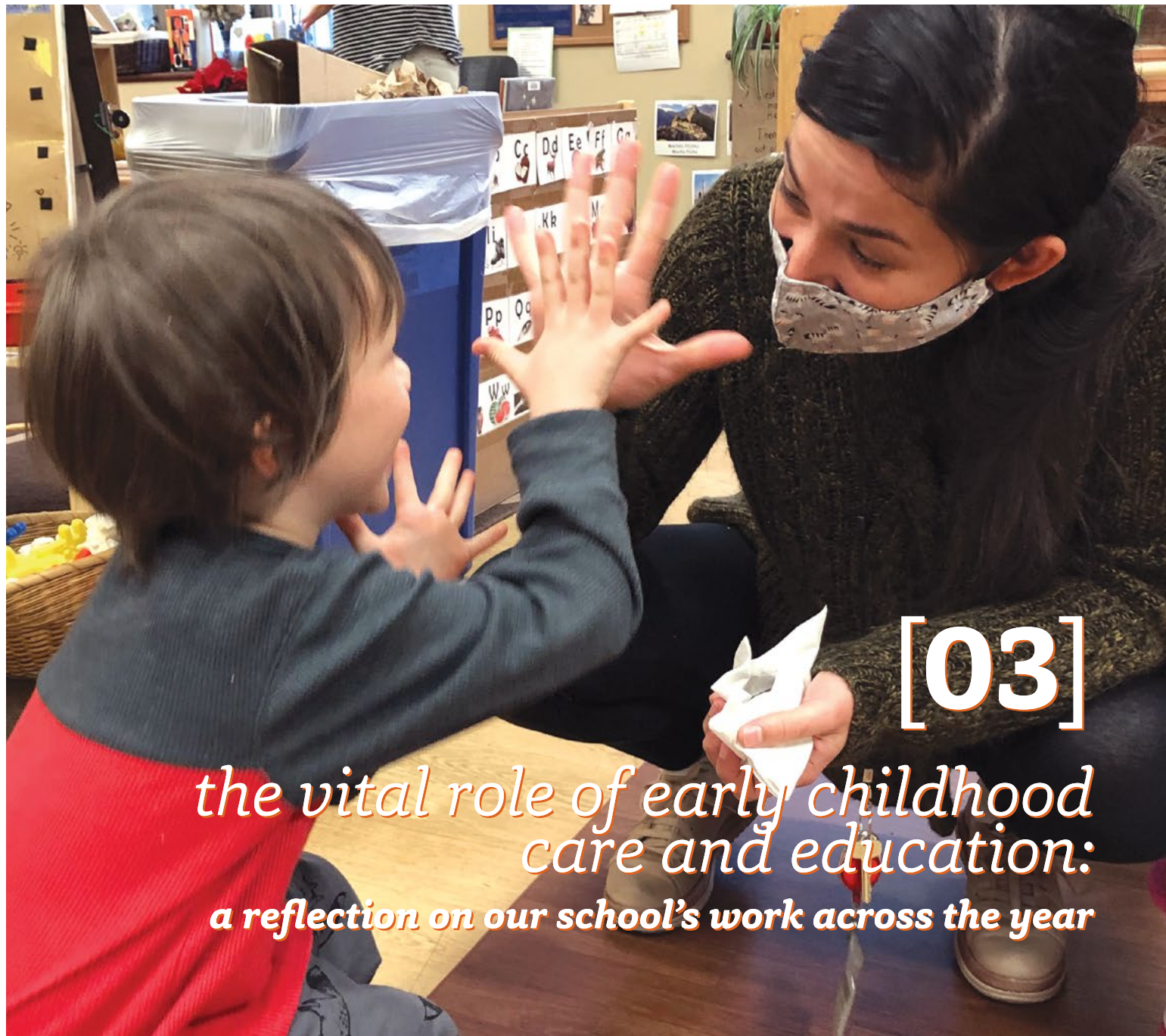


30 children

transitioned from the A. Sophie Rogers School to kindergarten, all with well-developed school readiness







[03]

*the vital role of early childhood care and education:  
a reflection on our school's work across the year*

The A. Sophie Rogers School for Early Learning (ASR), a language-rich, research-driven school serving children from birth to kindergarten, has a rich history going back almost a century. The original iteration of the school was founded in the late 1930s by A. Sophie Rogers, a pediatrician who pioneered early childhood education causes. In that time, the school has perhaps never responded so quickly and creatively as it did this year to pandemic conditions. ASR's profound commitment to its students in 2020 has underscored what we already know about the leaders and teachers in early childhood education: the work of caring for and educating young children is difficult, often unseen or undervalued by society, and yet critical for children, their families, the K-12 school system, the economy and far more.

### **Reaching families via YouTube and websites**

Amid the temporary COVID-19 statewide closures, ASR teachers and practitioners quickly got online in order to provide children and families with a connection to their routine as well as to offer support and activities for them at home. From teaching yoga to sharing family recipes while they talk about the impacts of social distancing, to virtual math lessons and sing-a-longs with Chef Mark (where he even donned his chef's attire to help the children with context), the "[Early Childhood at OSU](#)" channel was created to provide fun and helpful resources for children and their caregivers.

Our team also researched and [compiled COVID-19 resources](#) for families as well as [new content](#) offerings in response to the pandemic.

### **Tips for parents at home during COVID**

Beyond the school's support for enrolled families, ASR educators teamed up with colleagues from across the university to offer expert support to any family at home with their children during the pandemic. To this end, Schoenbaum Family Center staff worked with Ohio State's Alumni Association to offer [webinars on parenting and language and literacy development](#) to more than 350 families. OSU Early Head Start lead education specialist Lisa Welsh and ASR principal Anneliese Johnson presented "Everyday Activities for Young Children While at Home, Babies to Age Six," a topic also [covered by](#) Ohio State's Insights. Anneliese was then joined by vice-principal Samantha Peterson for a session on "Mediating Sibling Rivalry and Supporting Conflict Resolution with Young Children." The final webinar, "Best Practices in Shared Reading to Get the Most from Story Times with Young Children," was presented by ASR library technician Kari Welch and Samantha.

Additionally, Vanessa Shrontz, ASR preschool master teacher, along with Dr. Keeley Pratt, associate professor in Ohio State's Department of Human Sciences, spoke with OSU Insights to offer eight strategies to [help support children as they return to school](#) amid back-to-school fears.

### **Digitizing educator tools**

Throughout the pandemic, ASR staff took the opportunity to move educator tools into a digital format. Specifically, they transitioned two classroom observation systems, two assessments and two screeners in order to better and more quickly inform teachers of a child's progress. They also created five digital checklists, child assessment logs and teacher coaching forms to better support and coach best practices in classrooms.

### **Reopening the school**

In June, as the state allowed early care and education programs to begin to reopen, ASR began meeting in-person again and rebuilt enrollment. The school was proud to welcome 70 new and returning families for the summer/fall of 2020. The ASR school was also able to conduct initial child screenings and assessments in five developmental and learning domains for all enrolled children. The school also held regular, virtual, family conferences for all children. Capping at a 70% capacity allowed for social distancing, smaller group sizes and additional cleaning and disinfection while maintaining the same commitment to high quality learning and engagement as before the closure.

### **Looking forward: ASR as a model literacy site and training ground**

ASR was awarded [a four-year grant](#) of \$394,000 from the Ohio Department of Education to become a model site for literacy as an educational and training site for other programs in the region and state. The school will increase best practices in language and literacy instruction for educators as well as families by promoting seven research-based practices that best support literacy development at home. In ASR classrooms, children will engage in weekly sessions of the Read It Again! Pre-K and Read It Again! Infant/Toddler curriculum and activities that are tailored to each child's level. Children who qualify, based upon progress monitoring, will also be offered additional tiered reading and writing activities throughout the year. Strategies and tactics from this program will also be incorporated into the school's library story times and family engagement activities. ■





[04]

*renewed urgency:  
anti-bias and anti-racism in early childhood education*

This year, the pandemic amplified the ways in which systemic racism and racial inequities have long impacted families and children of color disproportionately. At the same time, the disturbing and needless deaths of Black men, women and children brought racial equity more fully into public focus. In response to this, we aimed to focus our time, attention and platforms to promoting anti-bias and anti-racism in the field of early childhood education.



## **2020 Symposium on Children: Anti-Bias and Anti-Racist Practices in Early Childhood Education**

Anti-bias and anti-racism (ABAR) were the critically important focus of the Crane Center's [2020 Symposium on Children](#). [Tanny Crane](#) and [Dean Donald Pope Davis](#) opened the day by framing why ABAR is a critical topic warranting full coverage in this year's symposium. Author and keynote speaker [Dr. Iheoma U. Iruka](#) challenged participants by asking, "Do we really want a solution (that may require us to look, think, and act differently)?" She emphasized that ABAR is a personal journey of unlearning and relearning, and she shared how historical policies and practices created racial disparities which became associations and assumptions about Black and brown people that still impact communities today. Dr. Iruka also outlined her framework for actionable steps toward ABAR.

The day's breakout sessions were led by nationally renowned experts.

- Dr. Iruka was joined by co-author [Dr. Stephanie M. Curenton](#) for a deep dive discussion into their book, *Don't Look Away: Embracing Anti-Bias Classrooms*, as well as practical, actionable steps for educators in promoting ABAR practices.
- [Dr. J. Luke Wood](#) presented on the ways in which we see Black minds being undervalued and over-criminalized in education while challenging us to consider how the education system itself may add to the trauma and different experiences for children of color.
- [Alycia Hardy](#) and [Christine Johnson-Staub](#) discussed the historical context of racial inequity and how it shows up in today's classrooms. They also highlighted the importance of centering voices of color in policy creation as well as addressing the prevalence of "scarcity thinking" about early childhood investments.
- [Medina Jackson](#) and [Dr. Brian L. Wright](#) dug into developing positive racial identities for young, Black children so they can embrace their heritage. They offered a great list of resources and books that teachers could introduce to begin these conversations.

Participants also heard from educators who shared ABAR practices in action, showcasing the dedicated efforts of [Graciela Ceja](#), [Soobin Oh](#) and [Dr. William P. Jackson](#). The final session of the day showcased city, county and state policy leaders' vision for and work toward early childhood equity. The discussion, moderated by Dr. Valerie Alloy, featured [Columbus City Councilmember Priscilla Tyson](#), Franklin County Department of Job and Family Services Director Joy Bivens and [State Representative Stephanie Howse](#). Ohio State's vice provost for diversity and inclusion and chief diversity officer [Dr. James L. Moore, III](#) closed the day by reminding us that today's ABAR equity work in early childhood is planting seeds that will be reaped tomorrow.

### **Book study (and guide) on anti-bias and anti-racism**

OSU Early Head Start education specialists, Latoya Jackson and Stacy Orbaker, teamed up with book authors Drs. Iheoma U. Iruka and Stephanie M. Curenton to create a how-to-guide for studying the book, *Don't Look Away: Embracing Anti-Bias Classrooms*. The [guide](#) describes how book studies are one useful strategy to promote ABAR and also outlines our own approach for discussion in the A. Sophie Rogers School for Early Learning and Schoenbaum Family Center. The book study guide was shared with participants of our 2020 Symposium on Children (125 of whom received a free copy of the book) to help spark ideas or to serve as a framework to begin affecting change in a professional setting.

### **New undergraduate course on cultural diversity, citizenship and social justice**

Crane senior research associate Dr. Kate Nelson and Crane Center's director of research Dr. Mitsu Narui received an Ohio State grant for a service-learning course to offer to undergraduate students at the university. The course intertwined education on cultural diversity, citizenship and social justice with practical service in the field, working with a Crane project called Kindergarten Corps. Through the course, students also learned the importance of incorporating civic engagement into their future careers. ■





[05]

*high-caliber research:  
adapting to change while keeping the work on track*

Unsurprisingly, the pandemic created obstacles for data collection and ongoing research. Take just one example: How can researchers run diagnostics on children whose schools have been ordered to close? Our research teams adjusted rapidly in this climate, seeking new and innovative ways to keep research integrity while collecting data virtually (where possible) or even designing new research questions. We also found ourselves asking tough questions about the emerging new research landscape – in which fewer children are attending preschool or kindergarten, more children have missed formal learning time and more families are facing unique stressors (which in turn impact children’s well-being).

### **Rapid-response research about the pandemic**

Recognizing the ripple effects from the pandemic on children and families in terms of the social isolation, stress, anxiety and other hardships faced, leaders from Crane research projects came together to design a rapid-response study of the experiences of families with children during COVID-19. Their findings were published in a white paper, [Ohio Families Struggle During COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

### **New grant opportunities**

Despite 2020's challenges, our team was hard at work applying for new grant opportunities to fund ideas that will build and advance the early childhood knowledge base in a rapidly shifting world. This year, Crane researchers and Schoenbaum programs received 11 new awards totaling more than \$8.4 million.

These awards, coming from a variety of sources including the Institute of Education Sciences and National Institutes of Health, will allow researchers to make discoveries and bring new evidence to bear in key areas, including:

- Examining if teacher wage increases improve preschool quality
- Establishing a model literacy site
- Piloting new professional development around cultural responsiveness and equity
- Studying how elementary school teachers can blend face-to-face and online learning for critical dialogue about civic issues
- Improving social skills and connections for elementary students with severe autism or intellectual disabilities
- Examining how classmates can support the early learning of children with disabilities
- Studying how differences in socioeconomic status are related to children's early language development, including special, urgent funding to revise research due to COVID-19 impacts
- Examining early child care and education in Franklin County, Ohio, the state of Wyoming and Ethiopia

### **Published research**

This year, Crane Center researchers were hard at work publishing high-caliber research on issues that impact our youngest learners. In 2020, they published 75 peer-reviewed research articles and their work was cited 2,791 times. Their work was featured in a variety of leading publications and represented a wide range of cutting-edge research techniques. Below are just a few highlights of this year's large body of work.

#### **Children's exposure to pesticides or household cleaners can lead to language delay**

Crane Center scientists examined whether exposure to environmental toxicants, such as those found in pesticides or household cleaners, may disrupt language and cognitive development for children from low-income homes. Results showed that toxicant exposure was significantly associated with lags in language and cognition, regardless of household income.

- Crane researchers: Dr. Hui Jiang, Dr. Laura Justice, Dr. Kelly Purtell and Dr. Randi Bates
- Published in: [Clinical Pediatrics](#)
- Covered by: [Ohio State News](#), [Neuroscience News](#) and [Science Daily](#)

#### **Long-term consequences of K-8 school absences**

Few, if any, studies have examined the links between school absences and longer-term markers of educational and life success, prompting this study to help fill this gap in knowledge. Notably, it found that children with higher absences: 1) were not more likely to engage in risky or deviant behaviors or criminal activities as young adults; 2) were less likely to vote; 3) were more likely to receive government assistance and less likely to be employed as young adults; and 4) did not do as well educationally. Importantly, administrators and educators should consider developing intervention and prevention programs to successfully reduce absences before high school.

- Crane researcher: Dr. Arya Ansari
- Published in: [Journal of Youth and Adolescence](#)
- Covered by: [U.S. News & World Report](#), [United Press International](#), [Medindia](#), [moms.com](#) and [MotherHood In-Style Magazine](#)



### **Classmates matter in language development**

While a child's peers are a rich resource for many things, this study [showed](#) that a child's language growth is directly tied to their classmates' language skills, and that the benefit is especially true for children with disabilities. The authors recommend that teachers consider language ability when grouping children for activities to make sure that children with lower skills are partnered with those with higher skills.

- Crane researchers: Dr. Jing Chen, Dr. Laura Justice and Dr. Sherine Tambyraja
- Published in: *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*

### **When moms don't feel confident as a parent, they are more likely to be food insecure**

Food insecurity is already known to be linked to depression in mothers, so Crane researchers investigated this further by studying whether a mother's sense of confidence as a parent was also related to this link. They [found](#) that when a mom felt confident, there was no relationship between depression and food insecurity. On the other hand, when she did not feel confident, there was a stronger link between the two. Helping mothers feel self-confident as parents can be an important way to promote children's well-being on many fronts.

- Crane researchers: Dr. Jaclyn Dynia, Dr. Rebecca Dore and Dr. Kelly Purtell
- Published in: *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*

### **Discovery of a new way to identify gaps in literacy skills**

Crane researchers comprehensively examined children's early writing skills and [discovered](#) an assessment that effectively identified those possibly at risk for writing difficulties later on. This means that teachers could potentially intervene more quickly through earlier awareness.

- Crane researchers: Leiah Thomas and Dr. Shayne Piasta
- Published in: *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*

### **Supporting teachers' professional development is key to quality**

A new [study](#) showed that as teachers learned more about language and literacy development, they then used more evidenced-based practices in their teaching. This, in turn, led to growth in their students' skills, driving home the fact that ongoing professional development for teachers is essential and a worthwhile investment.

- Crane researchers: Dr. Shayne Piasta, Dr. Laura Justice and Somin Park
- Published in: *Reading and Writing*

### **Are infants who have extra caregivers more communicative?**

Curiosity around whether babies who are also cared for by someone other than their mother (i.e., those in early childhood programs) were more communicative was the inspiration for [this Crane study](#). The idea was that these children had more opportunities to practice, but the study found that it did not help or hurt their skills. Interestingly though, the study did find that the number of siblings around a child related directly to their ability to follow commands, point and reach.

- Crane researcher: Dr. Britt Singletary
- Published in: *Infant Behavior and Development*

### **How long do the advantages of pre-K last?**

It is proven that attending preschool benefits children as they enter kindergarten, but how long those advantages last is still to be determined. This Crane research found that those benefits continued throughout the kindergarten year, but, by the end of the year, the benefits had diminished by more than half as classmates made gains. This leads to an important reminder that pre-K is one (very worthwhile) investment in creating equal opportunities but that it doesn't end there. Other investments are needed to continue this good start and to make sure that children are set up to succeed.

- Crane researcher: Dr. Arya Ansari
- Published in: [Developmental Psychology](#)
- Covered by: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Consumer Affairs](#), [Fordham Institute](#), [The Sector](#) and [Science Daily](#)

## Building the base of early childhood language and literacy expertise: A look at ongoing Crane research projects

### **Does our neighborhood sway how we parent?**

Theories suggest that neighborhoods influence how families function and can offer social supports that are positive for parents, especially for those in stressful situations. Looking specifically at how this theory applied to mothers of infants, Crane researchers [found](#) that mothers who had more supports available also felt more confident in caring for their baby. They also found that the quality of the neighborhood did not affect access to these supports, but it was a factor in parent involvement.

- Crane researchers: Dr. Jaclyn Dynia, Dr. Laura Justice and Dr. Kelly Purtell
- Published in: *Maternal and Child Health Journal*

### **Barriers to early childhood for families of Mexican-origin**

Equitable access to early childhood care and education prompted [this study](#) which focused on the barriers that keep families of Mexican-origin from entering these programs. Understanding the complex ethnic and immigration-based nature of these barriers leads then to the next step of removing them.

- Crane researcher: Dr. Arya Ansari
- Published in: *Social Science Research*

### **Other notable papers published this year on key early childhood topics included:**

- studying the [research-to-practice gap](#) for teachers of students with autism by Dr. Matthew Brock
- analyzing [children's exposure](#) to child-directed speech in preschool classrooms by Dr. Hugo Gonzalez Villasanti
- understanding how a [child's media use impacts language and literacy skills](#) by Dr. Rebecca Dore
- understanding how speech-language pathologists [engage parents in facilitating speech therapy](#) by Dr. Sherine Tambyraja
- understanding [policies and practices](#) that support successful transitions to kindergarten by Dr. Kelly Purtell

**Alphabet Learning and Instruction:** This body of Crane work showcases the rigorous and extensive [research that led to the creation of assessments and best practices](#) available for teachers to use in their practice.

- Principal investigator: Dr. Shayne Piasta

**SMALL Talk:** This five-year longitudinal Crane study [identifies risk factors for early language impairment](#) and how parenting and chronic stress may affect language development. The goal of this study is tied to public health in that identifying risk factors is the first step to prevention.

- Principal investigator: Dr. Laura Justice

**Kindergarten Transition Practices:** This five-year Crane project aims to [fundamentally advance our understanding of young children's transition into kindergarten](#). The intervention examined within this project focuses on connections among community, teachers, families, peers and children as the primary way to successfully transition children to kindergarten and support them as they adjust.

- Principal investigator: Dr. Laura Justice

**Striving Readers:** This three-year Schoenbaum grant focuses on [language and literacy outcomes for children birth to age five who may benefit from extra support in reading development](#). It also focuses on professional development for teachers as they implement evidence-based practices in their classroom. Free, online professional development modules were created that offer Ohio-approved continuing education units for teachers. Additionally, Crane Center researchers partnered to develop the Read It Again! Infant/Toddler curriculum to support these efforts.

- Principal investigator: Dr. Jaclyn Dynia ■





[06]

*serving the community:  
programming, coaching and collaboration*

The Schoenbaum and Crane Centers provide community-based programming to provide high quality, research-based, early childhood opportunities for families throughout central Ohio while also coordinating with other service agencies. It holds true that for these programs, 2020 proved to be a challenging year that required quick thinking and adjustments to service delivery. As families and educators grappled with the upending of their day-to-day lives, these services provided a vital, reliable network of support during a very disruptive year.



### **Columbus Cares Kid Kits**

At the outset of the pandemic, we teamed up with Action for Children, Nationwide Children’s Hospital (NCH) and Future Ready Columbus to create 3000 [Columbus Cares Kid Kits](#) for families with children ages 5 and under who may not have access to virtual programming. Using local NCH Close-to-Home locations for distribution, the kits had age-appropriate learning materials and literature about parenting in these challenging times. This endeavor was made possible through the philanthropic efforts of each partner, including financial support from Dean Donald Pope-Davis of OSU’s College of Education and Human Ecology, and through the generosity of the community.

### **OSU Early Head Start Partnership Program**

Since receiving a 5-year renewal grant, the [OSU Early Head Start Partnership Program](#) (OSU-EHS) focused this year on a deepened commitment to quality and expanded services to the 251 infants and toddlers they served this year across 18 home- and center-based sites. Working in some of Columbus’ most vulnerable neighborhoods, the OSU-EHS program also leveraged support services for children and families through a network of 19 university and community agency partnerships.

For the 2019-2020 school year, OSU-EHS [reported](#):

- 100% of their providers earned 3-stars or higher in Ohio’s quality rating system (Step Up to Quality).
- Through a collaboration with Crane researchers and Schoenbaum administrators, the program piloted Read It Again! Infant/Toddler Curriculum within their provider settings to examine the new – potentially powerful – book-reading intervention for children living in low-income homes.
- The team facilitated 70 hours of professional development to nearly 400 participants.
- With guidance from Children’s Hunger Alliance and Columbus Public Health, seven dietetic interns (from OSU’s nutrition program) worked with OSU-EHS providers to review menus and create engagement activities to help families with healthy meal choices at home.
- Over 120,000 diapers were donated or purchased for provider sites (to eliminate the burden on families to provide them.)

- 179 infants and toddlers received vision screenings, of which 20% were prescribed glasses that were paid for through special funding from the OSU College of Optometry.
- 103 children also completed hearing exams.
- OSU-EHS parents collectively volunteered 9,916 hours to the program.

### **Ready4Success**

[Ready4Success](#) (R4S) is a kindergarten readiness initiative that is funded by the City of Columbus to build and expand high quality pre-K options for young children across the city. R4S partners with center-based care providers to offer professional development and instructional coaching at no cost. The offerings focus on effective instructional strategies to increase early literacy and math skills in preschool age children. R4S also aids in assessing children’s skills and knowledge when entering pre-K and in measuring gains in math and literacy skills throughout the year. During the 2019-2020 school year, R4S provided services to 42 providers, including Columbus City Schools, reaching teachers from 63 classrooms who collectively serve more than 1,080 children.

### **Summer Success at Home – a virtual adaptation of a kindergarten-readiness program**

Since 2016 and in partnership with the City of Columbus, the Schoenbaum and Crane Centers have offered a summertime experience called [Summer Success](#) to help children get ready for kindergarten. This year the program moved to a virtual format, creating the Summer Success at Home program, for 100 kindergarten-bound children from lower-income households. This year’s program was a success, [reporting](#) that:

- Parent interest exceeded the 100 available slots.
- Virtual programming was feasible and children were generally engaged in lessons.
- Children showed significant gains in literacy, math and social-emotional skills.
- 95% of parents rated the overall experience with the program as “excellent.”
- 95% of parents rated the program as “helpful” or “very helpful” in helping them work with their children.
- 100% of parents thought that the program increased their child’s kindergarten readiness. ■





[07]

*bringing research rigor to real life:  
broader partnerships*

In any given year, we work hard to strengthen the base of early childhood evidence and bring new findings to the forefront. But we also want to bring our research expertise to bear in tangible ways in our immediate community and share our expertise with those making real-life decisions based on the research. We do this primarily through program evaluations that are made possible through strong partnerships and through other client-focused analysis.

### **A new study of Central Ohio's early childhood landscape**

In partnership with the City of Columbus and Future Ready Columbus, the Crane Center embarked on a new study of the early care and education (ECE) landscape in Franklin County, with a focus on the experiences of families with children 5 years of age and under. The study will gather key data and information from families with young children from a diverse range of household incomes, races and ethnicities. The study also will focus in areas where fewer children exhibit high levels of kindergarten readiness and where the City of Columbus recently implemented community development plans.

The study is designed to determine the prevalent ECE experiences of children, including children's participation in formal and informal ECE arrangements; caregiver beliefs and practices; and home learning activities and experiences. The study will also identify both barriers and enablers to ECE participation.

### **Analyzing the state of Wyoming's child care subsidy program**

This year, Crane policy researchers Caitlin Lennon, Jamie O'Leary and Dr. Laura Justice, along with Scioto Analysis' Rob Moore, embarked on a study of Wyoming's child care program. Launched in July, the 12-month analysis will examine key trends related to the state's publicly funded care program; compare/contrast their processes and participation rates with other neighboring states; and lead the agency in a strategic planning process to ultimately improve the equity of the state's program.

### **Evaluating Ohio State's child care program for student parents**

The Crane Center is the evaluator for the OSU Child Care Access Means Parents in School ([CCAMPIS](#)) project. CCAMPIS is a federally funded program that provides high-quality child care services for parents from low-income households who are enrolled in postsecondary education. ■





[08]

*engaging in new ways:  
advancing ideas for policy makers, the media,  
parents, and new audiences*

Our work at the Crane and Schoenbaum Centers is deeply aligned with our Ohio State identity, and the university's land-grant mission means that we aim to bring knowledge to the public and for the public good. Research is at its best when it is shared within strong partnerships, disseminated widely and made available to a variety of groups beyond the academy.

### Policy writing and analysis

This year, we sent out Tuned In, a weekly digest of news, information and analysis related to early childhood policy, state legislation and politics, and other curated items so that anyone interested in children or education can keep themselves informed. (Go to our website to [sign up](#) for that newsletter.) We also [tracked](#) coronavirus-relevant state and local legislative and regulatory updates as they were rolled out.

In 2020, we also examined state and federal policies impacting children and tried to provide thought leadership, like with Dr. Laura Justice's [three-part](#) series on [how to fix](#) the broken and fragmented [child care system](#) in the U.S., as published by [Early Learning Nation](#).

### Engaging policy leaders

The pandemic made it difficult to engage policy leaders in person, but technology – and more importantly, having strong and committed early childhood champions in our state – made it possible to host rich discussions virtually. In July, we hosted a [webinar](#) on rebuilding Ohio's early childhood education system with a panel featuring [State Senator Peggy Lehner](#); [State Representative Allison Russo](#); [Robyn Lightcap](#), executive director of Learn to Earn Dayton; and Kim Jarvis, owner and director of [On Purpose Academy and Mentoring Center](#). These leaders discussed child care quality, access, racial equity, and what policy leaders need to consider to ensure that the early childhood future we rebuild serves children and families better than it has in the past.

We also invited several elected officials and agency leaders to speak at our [2020 Symposium on Children](#).

### Connecting with local media and writing for non-academic audiences

- In the spring, Dr. Laura Justice penned an [op-ed](#) in *The Columbus Dispatch*, encouraging parents in the early days of the pandemic to focus on three strategies while managing young children at home during COVID-19. She explained, from a child-development and research perspective, that parents should focus most on reading, talking with children (using serve-and-return interactions), and on reducing their own stress.
- Crane senior research scientist Dr. Rebecca Dore was quoted in *The Columbus Dispatch* and [Cleveland.com](#), discussing research on screen use and executive function for stories centering on the new world of remote learning for so many Ohio families.
- Cleveland.com also published an [article about our webinar](#) on rebuilding the early childhood system, capturing several great quotes from the panelists.
- Associate director of policy Jamie O'Leary [talked to](#) Cleveland.com about the state's decision to allow child care programs to serve school-age children during the pandemic.

### Providing expertise to parents and families

This year, we teamed up with the OSU Alumni Association to offer [three live webinars](#) for families who were home with their young children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Crane and Schoenbaum experts also created written and recorded resources in response to needs expressed by community members.

- Crane senior research associate Dr. Kate Nelson shared [research-backed tips](#) to make the most out of shared reading experiences, as well as



some suggestions for children’s books to help get started.

- Kari Welch, ASR’s literacy technician and now a teacher in the school, was featured in a compilation by an Ohio State [reading expert](#) in a list of [7 books for kids to understand times of crisis](#).
- Crane senior research associate Dr. Rebecca Dore (co-authored with Dr. Roberta Golinkoff) was featured by the Center for Scholars and Storytellers for an [article about joint media engagement](#) (parents and children using media together).

### Trying out new formats

This year we explored the use of more digital formats for our content, including a series of [video shorts](#) about building a better early care and education system, and other video features.

Topics and speakers include:

- Global perspectives on early childhood education, Dr. Laura Justice
- The role (and importance) of parents, Dr. Sherine Tambyraja
- The importance of early education for brain development vs. workforce support, Anneliese Johnson
- Virtual education and children with disabilities, Dr. Matt Brock
- A strategy for equity, Dr. Monica Stigler
- Making the case for investing in early childhood infrastructure, Jamie O’Leary
- The unique needs of student parents, DeVaughn Croxton
- Holistic support for children and families, Sherrie Sutton

- Supporting professional development of early educators, Shelby Dowdy
- Expectations of early learning programs, Dr. Arya Ansari

The Schoenbaum and Crane Centers, along with the College of Education and Human Ecology, were featured by the [Council for Exceptional Children](#) (CEC) at its annual conference, alongside six other university and community initiatives. The [video](#) highlighted the uniqueness of our ecosystem – where research, practice, policy and teacher training come together to make a real-world impact on children and families.

Teachers from our partner [early childhood program](#) were featured by [New America](#), a national think tank that provides insight and research on a range of issues including early childhood. The [video](#) showcasing practitioner perspectives on quality in early learning environments – originally premiered at our annual Symposium on Children in 2019 – was included as part of a [new initiative](#) by New America to collect videos demonstrating the complexity of early educators’ jobs. ■







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*other 2020 highlights of note*

## Events

Our events are the natural avenue by which we share the latest research and give attention to the most pressing topics in the field of early child care and education. While the pandemic forced us all to work in new ways, it also gave us a chance to re-imagine how we share these insights, and this summer, we successfully moved to a virtual platform. This change, excitingly, opened the opportunity for more people, from more places, to participate. We were also able to respond more quickly to the needs of the community, hosting new events and expanding our annual signature event, the Crane Center's Symposium on Children.

Monthly during the academic year, Crane Research Forums host emerging research from the Crane Center, Ohio State and beyond. This year, we were proud to highlight the work of some incredible researchers, such as:

- Dr. Mary Wagner Fuhs, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Dayton, who spoke about [research on teachers' fidelity](#) to "Conscious Discipline," a widely-used social-emotional learning and classroom management curriculum that helps children develop vital social and academic skills as well as executive functioning
- Dr. Ruth McKoy Lowery, associate chair of teaching and learning and professor of children's literature and literacy at Ohio State, who examined the [experiences of Jamaican immigrant parents](#) as they adjust to the U.S. education system
- Dr. Dorian Harrison, assistant professor in teaching and learning at The Ohio State University, Newark Campus, who shared her [work on literacy instruction](#) in after-school programs
- Dr. Casey Boyd-Swan, assistant professor of economics in the College of Business Administration at Kent State University, who shared [research on the hiring practices](#) and preferences for child care providers
- Dr. Tzu-Jung Lin, associate professor in the department of educational studies and Crane Center faculty fellow, who shared findings from multiple studies that investigate [classroom social networks](#)

More than 1500 people registered for our 2020 events. Attendees, both local and national, came from all arenas related to early childhood, including child care providers, nonprofits, advocacy organizations and policy makers, and universities. This year, we also drew audiences from countries as far as Australia, Indonesia, South Korea, Brazil, Spain, Turkey and the Netherlands.

## New website launch

The Crane Center for Early Childhood Research and Policy launched a new website ([www.crane.osu.edu](http://www.crane.osu.edu)) with easier-to-navigate features to showcase the breadth of work done within the center. The new website and content also highlight the interconnected and vital collaboration with the partners housed under the same roof, the A. Sophie Rogers School for Early Learning and the Schoenbaum Family Center's community programs.

## White papers and briefs

Crane's white papers and briefs are meant to quickly put new research insights that are relevant to current early childhood topics in the hands of researchers, educators and policy makers. As such, they come complete with discussion points and recommendations based on our team's findings. This year's topics included:

- [Estimating the Costs and Benefits for Providers to Enter Ohio's Child Care Quality Rating System](#)
- [SPROUT: Crane Center's framework on defining quality in early childhood education](#)
- [Is Pre-Kindergarten Too Much Work and Not Enough Play? Examining instructional practices in preschool, kindergarten, and first grade](#)
- [Ohio Families Struggle during COVID-19 Pandemic: Preliminary findings from the Crane Center COVID & Families Study](#)
- [Going to College with Kids: Understanding the campus climate for student parents](#) ■





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*parting thoughts*

Thank you for your partnership in 2020 and for your onward momentum, despite a challenging year. Especially, thank you for working to improve the well-being of children from whatever role you occupy, and for engaging with and supporting us as we strive to advance rigorous research as well as applicable solutions for practitioners and policy makers. We look forward to seeing you and hearing from you at [events](#), on our [subscriber list](#), on [social media](#), and out in the community. ■

## *author note*

This report was written by Jamie O’Leary, associate director of policy, and Cathy Kupsky, communications and events coordinator. Both Caitlin Lennon, communications and policy specialist, and Janelle Williamson, administrative coordinator, also contributed to the content, and the paper was designed by Cathy Kupsky.



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