



# The Foundations for Life and School Readiness Begin in Infancy

## Track A Webcast Plenary Viewer's Guide

### Summary

Early experiences influence the architecture of our brains. Parents and caregivers, then, have a significant impact on a child's learning. This plenary talk will address the connection between experiences in infancy and school readiness and how early experiences and social interactions provide the foundation for lifelong learning.

### Key Messages

- Brain structure is shaped by a baby's daily interactions with primary caregivers and the environment.
- The quality of the care babies receive from primary caregivers influences attachment, self-regulation, communication with other adults and peers, and ability to engage approaches to learning.
- A baby's interactions with a familiar, predictable, responsive, primary caregiver create a sense of security, promote sound emotional development, and serve as a basis from which learning can take place
- The learning capacities of children are strongly influenced by the emotional components of a child's early relationships and home culture.



## Learning Objectives

At the end of the session the participants will be able to:

- Articulate how the quality of caregiving influences a baby's capacity for learning
- Identify strategies to directly implement which will influence the quality of caregiving across Early Head Start program options
- Articulate characteristics that represent school readiness in infants and toddlers

## Webcast Plenary Presenter

**Dr. J. Ronald Lally** is the Co-Director of the Center for Child and Family Studies at WestEd, an educational research and development laboratory in San Francisco. He received his doctorate in educational psychology from the University of Florida in 1968, and a post-doctoral Certificate of Infant Testing from the Child Development Research Centre in London in the same year. For many years, he was a professor at Syracuse University and chair of its Department of Child and Family Studies where he directed the Syracuse University Family Development Research Program, a longitudinal study of the impact of early intervention on low-income children and families that continued until the children reached age 15.

For the past 27 years, he has directed the work of the Program for Infant/Toddler Care, a collaboration between the California Department of Education and WestEd. The DVD and print materials of the program are the most widely distributed infant/toddler caregiver training materials in the world. Recently, he and his staff have been responsible for the development of infant-toddler and preschool guidelines and standards for the state of California and advised government agencies in charge of the development of early learning standards in six other states.

## Panelists

**Sarah Merrill** is an Infant Toddler Program Specialist with the Office of Head Start. She has worked in the infant/toddler field, including 14 years as an infant/toddler child care teacher in Boston, MA.. Sarah served as a National Head Start Fellow in 2000-2001, focusing on Early Head Start. She worked at ZERO TO THREE for 10 years in a variety of roles, including Sr. Early Childhood Associate within the Head Start Bureau, Mentor Coach Coordinator for the Learning, Literacy and Life Project, and Sr. Writer/Training Specialist for the Early Head Start National Resource Center. Sarah received a bachelor's degree in infant/toddler child development and a master's degree in teacher leadership from Wheelock College in Boston.

**Claudia Quigg** is the founding executive director of Baby TALK. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Millikin University in 1975 and her Master of Education from the University of Illinois in 1977. She is an adjunct assistant professor at Millikin University and a consultant to the Brazelton Touchpoints Center of Children's Hospital Boston. Ms. Quigg serves on the Illinois Early Learning



Council. She writes a weekly newspaper column for parents entitled "Let's Talk Kids," records a weekly Illinois NPR radio segment, and has recently published her first book, *Let's Talk Kids: Becoming a Family*. Ms. Quigg is a frequent speaker at national meetings and writes regularly for parents and professionals. Her commitment to parent-child relationships, critical early development, and system building has enabled her to be a proponent for these related causes.

**Tarima Levine** is the assistant director and a materials development specialist for the Office of Head Start National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (NCCLR) at Bank Street College. She was previously the co-director of the Bank Street Family Center Home and Community-Based Program, and was a special education itinerant teacher and early intervention teacher for over 15 years. Ms. Levine has worked with diverse groups as a staff developer, early childhood specialist, Child Development Associate instructor, graduate school instructor, and parent educator for Head Start and early childhood programs across the New York tri-state area. Ms. Levine was a consultant, curriculum developer, and trainer for the National Head Start Family Literacy Center and a learning coach for StoryQUEST, a national research project to promote early literacy skills within Early Head Start. She has published numerous articles and co-authored the chapter "Resources to Promote Language and Literacy" in *Learning to Read the World: Language and Literacy in the First Three Years*, published by ZERO TO THREE press. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Barnard College, Columbia University and her Master of Education in Early Childhood Special Education from Bank Street College of Education.

**Tweety Yates** is a research assistant professor at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign and is on the staff for the Office of Head Start National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL). Previously she served as co-project coordinator for the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL). She has primarily focused her work on parent-child interaction, social emotional development, early literacy, and professional development. Ms. Yates has worked as a home visitor and facilitated parent-child groups. She is a past president of the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children

## Panel Moderator

**Terra Bonds Clark** is currently the Director of Special Initiatives for the Early Head Start National Resource Center. She has worked on behalf of children and their families for over 20 years in a variety of programs, settings, and in varying capacities; she has a passion and commitment to service in the community. Terra began working with Early Head Start in 1997 providing direct services to children and families. Later, she had the distinct honor of participating in the OHS National Fellowship program, and has provided T/TA to the early care and education community since that time.



## Relevant Head Start Program Performance Standards

**1307.2 Definitions** - School readiness goals mean the expectations of children's status and progress across domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical well-being and motor development, and social and emotional development that will improve their readiness for kindergarten.

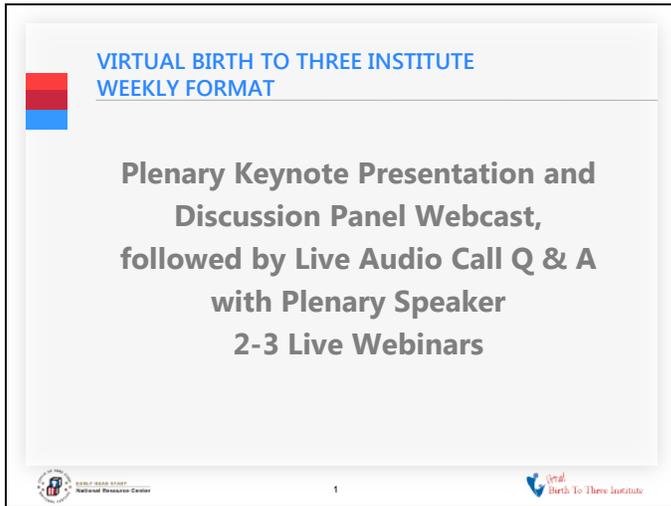
### Key Definitions

**School Readiness** - Head Start defines school readiness as children possessing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary for success in school and for later learning and life. The Head Start Approach to School Readiness means that children are ready for school, families are ready to support their children’s learning, and schools are ready for children. Head Start is a leader in the early childhood field with a strong, clear, and comprehensive focus on all aspects of healthy development, including physical, cognitive, and social and emotional development, all of which are essential to children getting ready for school. Retrieved from: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/sr/faq>

**Social Referencing** refers to the tendency of a person to look to a significant other in an ambiguous situation in order to obtain clarifying information, Dickstein, S. & Parke, R.D. (1988). Social referencing in infancy: a glance at fathers and marriage, *Child Development*, 59(2), 506-511

## Presentation Slides and Notes

Slide 1




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Slide 2

**WEEK 1 – TRACK A:  
INCLUSIVE CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

**Featured Plenary Presenter:  
Dr. Ronald Lally, Co-Director  
WestEd Center for  
Child and Family Services**




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Slide 3

**WEEK 1 – TRACK A:  
INCLUSIVE CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

**Plenary Webcast:  
The Foundations for Life and  
School Readiness Begin in Infancy**

**Tuesday, May 28, 2013  
2:00-3:30 p.m. EDT**




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Slide 4

**WEEK 1 – TRACK A:  
INCLUSIVE CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

**Webinar A1:  
Reflective Curriculum Planning  
for Infants and Toddlers**

**Wednesday, May 29, 2013  
2:00-3:30 p.m. EDT**




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Slide 5

**WEEK 1 – TRACK A:  
INCLUSIVE CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

**Webinar A2:  
Supporting the Intuitive Understanding  
of Early Math in Infants and Toddlers**

**Thursday, May 30, 2013  
2:00-3:30 p.m. EDT**




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Slide 6

**THE FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFE  
AND SCHOOL READINESS  
BEGIN IN INFANCY**

**J. Ronald Lally, Ed.D.**




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Slide 7



**We now appreciate the importance  
of early life experiences, as well as  
the inseparable and highly  
interactive influences of genetics  
and environment, on the  
development of the brain and the  
unfolding of human behavior.**




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Slide 8



**Beginning at least 3 months before conception, the constitution of the womb is affected by the prospective mother's:**

- Food and drink choices
- Ingestion of drugs and other toxins
- Stresses and other experiences

**This can affect the future learning ability and capacity of the baby.**



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Slide 9



**IMPORTANCE OF PRENATAL PERIOD**

- Just two thirds of the way through pregnancy not only will all organs have been formed but a good portion of the basic wiring of the brain will have already been completed



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Slide 10



**IMPORTANCE OF PRENATAL PERIOD**

**During the last 3 months of pregnancy, the brain and body of a fetus is shaped by information such as:**

- The amount of nutrients received
- The amount of stress experienced



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Slide 11

 **IMPORTANCE OF PRENATAL PERIOD**

During the last 3 months of pregnancy, the brain and body of a fetus is shaped by information such as:

- The amount of nutrients received
- The amount of stress experienced
- The languages and voices heard
- The tastes of the foods eaten

This prepares the baby for anticipated experiences once born.

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Slide 12

 **IMPORTANCE OF PRENATAL PERIOD**

- Recent science tells us that learning starts to take place while a child is still in the womb

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Slide 13



- Babies need a social womb to be protected the first three years of life
- Young children grow and develop based on the social experiences that they have with caregivers

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Slide 14

**WHAT YOUNG BABIES BRING TO THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

- **Babies are wired to expect that someone will be there to nurture and care for them**




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Slide 15

**WHAT YOUNG BABIES BRING TO THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

- **They are biologically programmed to emotionally attach to, imitate, and learn from their caregivers**
- **They are dependent on adults to provide them with experiences that structure their brains**




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Slide 16

**WHAT YOUNG BABIES BRING TO THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

- **The tenor of a baby's interactions with those who are the principal providers of their care directly influences either positively or negatively the emotional foundation for all other learning**
- **Intellectual and language development are stimulated by and cannot be segregated from early emotional development and in fact build on and are informed by the first interactions babies have with their primary caregivers**




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Slide 17

**WHAT THE MOBILE INFANT IS LEARNING (9-15 months)**

- The brain is preparing for life that doesn't revolve entirely around caregiver support
- Children will have to use lessons learned from caregivers to independently identify risks




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Slide 18

**WHAT THE MOBILE INFANT IS LEARNING (9-15 months)**

Children are gaining an understanding of which independent explorations are socially appropriate and which dangers they should avoid through adults' reactions to their actions.




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Slide 19

**WHAT THE MOBILE INFANT LEARNS ABOUT SELF FROM EARLY INTERACTION**

- I am listened to or not
- What I choose to do is valued or it isn't
- How I express my emotions is accepted or it isn't




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Slide 20

**WHAT THE MOBILE INFANT LEARNS ABOUT SELF FROM EARLY INTERACTION**

- I am allowed to explore or I am not
- Mostly my needs are met or they are not




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Slide 21

**WHAT THE OLDER INFANT IS LEARNING (15-36 months)**




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Slide 22

**WHAT THE OLDER INFANT IS LEARNING (15-36 months)**

Children are very sensitive to the judgments of others. Based on their interactions with others, they will:

- Form opinions of themselves and their worth
- Begin to judge the behaviors of others




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Slide 23

**WHAT THE OLDER INFANT IS LEARNING (15-36 months)**

With the help of their caregivers and through their relationships with others, children are learning to process information that will allow them to:

- Develop moral and ethical codes
- Better control their impulses and emotions
- Learn the rules of the culture, society, and family into which they were born



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Slide 24

**Competencies in later life are developed in the first three years of life.**



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Slide 25

**WHAT WE NEED TO DO**

- Find ways to give information to women before they become pregnant



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Slide 26



**WHAT WE NEED TO DO**

- Find ways to get parents and their children to spend as much time together as possible during the first 9 months of life
- Have people be there to help them with challenges



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Slide 27



**Children are critically and negatively influenced by shame and humiliation.**



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Slide 28



**The Foundations for Life and School Readiness Begin in Infancy**  
**Panel Response**

Sarah Merrill, Office of Head Start  
 Tarima Levine, Office of Head Start's National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness  
 Claudia Quigg, Baby Talk  
 Tweety Yates, Office of Head Start's National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning  
 Moderated by:  
 Terra Bonds Clark, Early Head Start National Resource Center



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Slide 29



**It is important for Early Head Start programs to be intentional in planning for the work they do with children and families and to engage families early and often to help them build attached relationships with their baby.**



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Slide 30



**Relationships are at the heart of school readiness for infants and toddlers.**



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Slide 31



**Relationships are at the heart of the context of learning for babies and all children.**



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Slide 32



**Daily routines are golden opportunities to provide individual interactions with children that support strong attachments.**



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Slide 33



**Every individual is rooted in culture.**



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Slide 34



**Culture influences how adults view a child's temperament.**



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Slide 35



**Through supportive relationships during infancy and toddlerhood, we are laying the foundation for our children to be successful in school and in life.**



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Slide 36



**It is important for programs to think about ways to support their staff in understanding infant/toddler development, their important role, and how their responses really support a child's growth and learning.**



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Slide 37



**It is important for program staff to be culturally competent when engaging children and families in the important early experiences.**



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Slide 38

**CULTURAL AWARENESS AND COMPETENCE INCLUDES**

- **Becoming more self-aware about your own cultural framework**
- **Using the strengths and cultural lenses of the families served to inform classroom activities and practices**



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Slide 39

**CULTURAL AWARENESS AND COMPETENCE INCLUDES**

- **Making sure that program policies, procedures, philosophy, and hiring practices are all reflective of the families served**



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Slide 40

**Programs should create time, space, and place for curiosity and exploration.**



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Slide 41



**It is important for programs to really engage families to help them build a system of strength that they can use throughout their child's life.**



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Slide 42



**Early experiences last a lifetime. They are crucial opportunities to provide responsive interactions and environments that support positive outcomes in both children and families.**



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Slide 43



**Environmental factors influence how a baby's brain grows and develops before birth. Early Head Start's work with expectant families can have a positive impact on helping them shape their baby's brain in an optimal way.**



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Slide 44



**Secure attachments to parents and caregivers provide infants with confidence that their needs will be met. This sense of security provides a safe home base from which the child is able to explore his or her environment and learns how to manage stress.**



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Slide 45



**Every individual is rooted in culture and it is important for Early Head Start programs to develop supportive relationships with children and families that are responsive to the families' home language and culture.**



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Slide 46



**THE HEAD START CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND EARLY LEARNING FRAMEWORK**




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Slide 47



To ask Dr. Lally a question,  
please call

International Toll: 719-325-4844  
US/CAN Toll Free: 877-397-0291  
Participant Passcode: 875884

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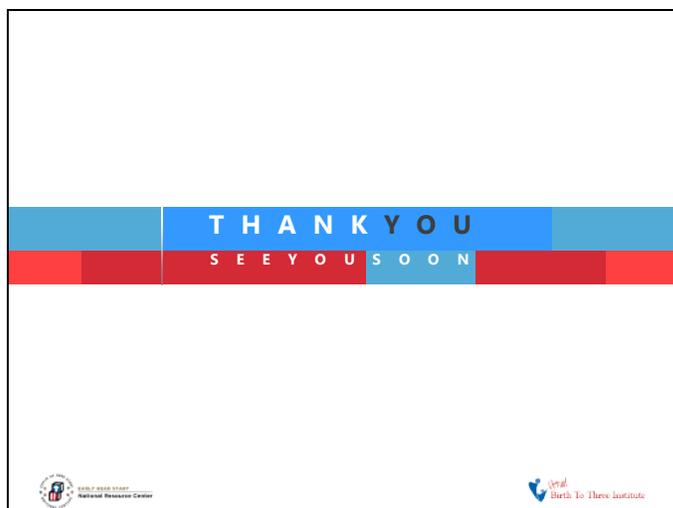
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Slide 48



THANK YOU  
SEE YOU SOON

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## Resources

Head Start Approach to School Readiness – Overview. Head Start Approach to School Readiness. HHS/ACF/OHS. 2011. English.

[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/sr/approach/pdf/OHSApproach-to-School-Readiness\\_complete.pdf](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/sr/approach/pdf/OHSApproach-to-School-Readiness_complete.pdf)

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. 2004. Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships.

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[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ttssystem/ehsnrc/Early%20Head%20Start/earlylearning/curriculum/in-fants\\_intodd\\_pub\\_00008apdf\\_122805.htm](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ttssystem/ehsnrc/Early%20Head%20Start/earlylearning/curriculum/in-fants_intodd_pub_00008apdf_122805.htm)

Using the Multicultural Principles To Establish a Framework to Create and Strengthen Language Policies and Procedures in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs. Academy for Educational Development. 2009. English.  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/Early%20Head%20Start/designplanning/program-planning/UsingtheMulticu.htm>

Zero to Three. 2012. "Tips for Promoting Social-Emotional Development."  
<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/social-emotional-development/tips-for-promoting-social-emotional-development.html>

## References

Lally, R.J. (2012). Want Success in School? Start with Babies! Kappa Delta Pi Record, 48: pgs. 10-16.

Lally, R.J. (2010). School Readiness Begins in Infancy. Kappan, 92(3), pgs. 17-21

Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five: Learning Extensions. HHS/ACF/OHS/NCCLR. 2013. English.  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/center/RevisitingandUp.htm>

