



NEW YEAR, NEW NAME

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Happy New Year!

We here at the *Dialog* all hope that you found time to relax and recharge somewhat during the winter holidays. Change is stressful, the “unknown” even more so, and as increasingly unpredictable as tomorrow seems, the more we realize the need to focus on living in the present, accomplishing what is reasonable, and doing our best to bring joy and encourage curiosity to the children in our charge. As we have dealt with global pandemics, regional weather events, changing venues for instruction, delayed (and cancelled) flights, the list goes on and on, we hope that you recognize that grabbing those unforeseen chunks of downtime (in airports? Hospitals? Classrooms?) and just reading an article or two in your ever-ready professional reading file will be enriching.

The university where one of our journal editors works underwent a name change through “rebranding”. The University of North Carolina at Charlotte is now referred to as just *Charlotte*, and this seemingly small change brought forth months of reworking designs and logos for anything and everything that was associated with that brand (including our journal). In light of this change, and taking advantage of an opportunity that had been discussed for years, we used this time to also change our journal name to align with our vision. You’ve probably noticed that our research and research-to-practice articles extend beyond the borders of the United States, we are an international journal. And while we still focus on the earliest years of learning, much of which takes place within the walls of Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms, we are no longer directly affiliated with the National Head Start Association. So, after much discussion and deliberation, the new name for the journal is *Head Start Dialog: The Research-to-Practice Journal for the Early Childhood Field*. We hope you enjoy our new look while maintaining our high quality of content. We appreciate the patience of our authors in navigating this change and as always, welcome your comments, thoughts, and service if you are interested in serving as a peer review for the journal.

Words matter! Relationships matter! And it takes words to build relationships through communication. This issue of the *Head Start Dialog* journal is chock full of some fascinating studies about teacher and assistant teacher language skills and the implementation of language enhancement strategies, communication factors that affect relationships between teachers and parents in Head Start classrooms, and the dramatic increase in the importance of word usage when instructional delivery was forced online due to COVID. To start off, Kate Ascetta of the University of South Carolina and Beth Harn of the University of Oregon tie these teacher traits to teacher professional development effectiveness with some very interesting findings for both teachers and leaders. Next, Luz Torres-Rendon and Katherine Zinsler of the University of Illinois, Chicago



share predictors discovered for parent-teacher relationship quality in Head Start classrooms based on a large sample from 176 programs, 346 centers, and 2 classrooms within selected centers. Among other findings, their research highlighted important implications for teacher training, teacher experience, teachers' perceptions of family-centered practice, and ethnic/racial match for supporting parents' feelings of comfort in the parent-teacher relationship. More specific to our recent reality of online delivery due to COVID, Ruth Guirguis of BMCC-CUNY and Raquel Plotka of Pace University explored the important role of teacher self-efficacy in teacher motivation and children's behavioral and academic outcomes, particularly in times of crises such as the present. It may come as no surprise that they found when teaching went online, teachers found that teaching academic skills was manageable, however, young children's social skills suffered.

Our issue concludes with a study of racial disparities among the physical and mental health needs of Head Start staff by Adam Blancher, Michelle Yetman, and Tyler Reekes of Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at Shreveport. As we know, the first step toward solving a problem is identifying it. Their study compared data from Head Start staff in Louisiana to a previously published data set on staff in Pennsylvania. They found that there was a significant discrepancy in the overall health and access to quality health care for select Head Start staff, largely following lines of socioeconomic status and race, raising the need to address professional development for staff with more focused intention toward achieving equitable outcomes for all based on needs assessments. And as is our custom, all of our research articles are followed up with research-to-practice articles for leaders to share with practitioners in the field. Our thanks to all of our researchers and practitioners as we embark on a new year with new challenges but with new knowledge to help improve learning environments for young children. Again, best wishes for a wonderful 2022 to all!