TENNESSEE VOLUNTARY PRE-K EVALUATION

Tennessee’s pre-kindergarten program expanded considerably in 2005, when the Tennessee General Assembly passed the Voluntary Pre-K for Tennessee Act. Since 2005, Tennessee has provided an additional $213 million for its Voluntary Pre-K Program (TN–VPK), creating 786 new classrooms, and serving an additional 15,000 preschoolers across the state. With the support of a five-year, $6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education, the Peabody Research Institute (PRI) partnered with the Tennessee Department of Education in 2009 to commence the first scientifically rigorous statewide evaluation of the effectiveness of the TN–VPK Program. In 2013, the PRI released the second report in its ongoing study which indicated that TN–VPK students made significantly greater gains on measures of literacy, language, and math and were rated by their teachers as better prepared for kindergarten, in terms of social and work-related skills, than their peers who did not attend TN–VPK.

SERVING THOSE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Peabody’s IRIS Center is a national resource for improving the pre-service preparation of future educators while increasing the knowledge and skills of current practitioners so that they might better work with all children, especially students with disabilities and their families. IRIS works with experts from across the nation to create online challenge-based interactive modules, case study units, and other resources and tools, the purpose of which is to provide research-validated information about working with children ages zero through 21 and their families. IRIS also provides a range of services to help college faculty infuse research-based practices into their courses and curricula. Thanks to a five-year grant of $7.5 million from the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs, IRIS is able to provide these materials and services free of charge.

NEW PRE-K TEACHING METHOD COULD CLOSE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

A new approach to teaching pre-kindergarten could take a bite out of the achievement gap and level the playing field for America’s growing population of English language learners, according to a study by researchers at Vanderbilt’s Peabody College of education and human development. The Enhanced Language and Literacy Success Project, which is supported by a U.S. Department of Education grant, is a four-year intervention and research effort performed in collaboration with Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools. The project proved that a language-rich pre-kindergarten curriculum paired with coaching, feedback, and professional development for teachers can improve student outcomes significantly.

READING DISABILITIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION OF LATE-EMERGERS

Vanderbilt researchers are examining the behaviors of students who display a late-emerging reading disability (LERD). Their goal is to distinguish among major types of LERD students and identify potential child-level factors that may be amenable to early or later intervention programs. With Institute of Education Sciences funding, researchers will explore promising predictor variables that could be used for the early identification of LERD students and investigate the effects of first-grade intervention on the prevalence rates of the LERD students.

$17.0 million
Awarded from the Department of Education

Peabody is one of the nation’s foremost colleges of education. In recent years, it has been consistently ranked among the top five graduate schools of education by U.S. News & World Report, including holding the No. 1 position for five of the last six years.
THE INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES), part of the U.S. Department of Education, is tasked with providing “rigorous and relevant evidence on which to ground education practice and policy and share this information broadly.” Researchers from Peabody College of education and human development often depend on funds from IES to conduct breakthrough research on critical local, state, and federal education policies.

PEABODY’S NATIONAL RESEARCH CENTERS

IES supports national R&D centers that are intended to contribute significantly to solving education problems in the United States by engaging in research, development, evaluations, and national leadership activities aimed at improving the education system and, ultimately, student achievement. Each of the R&D centers conducts a focused program of education research in its topic area. In addition, each center conducts supplemental research within its broad topic area and provides national leadership in advancing evidence-based practice and policy within its topic area.

Peabody is home to two such IES centers: the National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools and the Accelerated Academic Achievement (A3) Research Center. Prior National Research Centers located at Peabody College include the National Center on Performance Incentives, which was awarded a five-year $10.8 million grant in 2006, and the National Center on School Choice, which was awarded a five-year $9.9 million grant in 2004.

National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools

The National Center on Scaling Up Effective Schools (NCSU)—a collaborative partnership among research universities, education support providers, and two larger urban districts—is a five-year, $13.6 million grant. As a national research and development center on scaling up effective schools, NCSU focuses on identifying the combination of essential components and the programs, practices, processes, and policies that make some high schools in large urban districts particularly effective with low-income students, minority students, and English language learners. Then the center works with both teachers and school and district leaders to develop processes to share these practices with less-effective schools in the district.

Accelerated Academic Achievement (A3) Research Center

The National Center for Special Education Research (which is a part of the IES) awarded a team of Vanderbilt University professors $10 million to develop new math and reading strategies aimed at improving student success. The five-year grant, which was awarded in 2013, will establish an Accelerated Academic Achievement (A3) Research Center. This center will enable researchers to study instructional programs targeting students with the most severe learning disabilities in grades three to five. Studies will include children with learning disabilities and other children without a disability determination who experience persistent, severe difficulties in reading or mathematics.