



Newsletter

Welcome to STAR



Thanks for participating in STAR! Without your help this project would not be possible. Through the STAR Project, we are learning more about how children think and feel. Eventually, we will be able to observe how this helps children transition into kindergarten.

We look forward to seeing you and your child again when your child is 4.

So far, we have recruited 181 children from 92 childcare centers. We have completed 67 visits out of our goal of 300 visits.



Meet the Staff

Lauren Shinn

Lauren Shinn is the project coordinator for STAR. Lauren previously worked as a graduate assistant on the STAR Project in 2003. She finished her master's degree in December, 2005 at UNCG. Her thesis (currently under review for publication) examined gender and social class differences in parent-child interactions. In addition to working as STAR project coordinator, Lauren is currently taking courses at UNCG towards a certificate in nonprofit management. Lauren lives in Greensboro with her husband and two cats.

Investigator Spotlight



Investigator Spotlight: Dr. Marion O'Brien

Dr. Marion O'Brien is the director of the Family Research Center where we hold our visits. Dr. O'Brien teaches both graduate and undergraduate courses addressing topics from social development to research methods. In her research, Dr. O'Brien focuses on early development and parenting.

Dr. O'Brien recently wrote a book entitled Beyond the Autism Diagnosis: A Professional's Guide to Helping Families. In this book, Dr. O'Brien examines how parents cope when their child is diagnosed with autism and what professionals can do to best support the family during that difficult time.

In addition to her work with the STAR Project, Dr. O'Brien is involved with several other research projects. She is an investigator for the National Institutes of Health Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development. This is a national longitudinal study of more than 1,200 children and families that has been investigating families' child care, and school environments affect development for over 16 years. Dr. O'Brien also examines social behavior as an investigator for the Right Track Project at UNCG.

In our next issue - Dr. Garry Lange

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6 Ideas

To help children get an early start on reading:



1. "Read" Books Together; talk about pictures, let your child turn pages.
2. Have books, newspapers, and magazines at home, and read them yourself.
3. Visit the public library often
4. Let your child play with sturdy board books and soft cloth books
5. "Write" a book about your child's day using snapshots of family or pictures clipped from old magazines
6. Point out familiar words, letters, and your child's name



SCRATCH AND SNIFF WATERCOLOR PAINT

Ingredients:

- 1 Tablespoon unsweetened powdered drink mix
- 1 Tablespoon warm water
- Muffin tins or baby food jars

Directions:

Mix the water and drink mix in a small mixing bowl. Paint on paper the way you would with any watercolor paint. Use different drink mixes for different colors (grape, cherry, lemon, etc.) Let paint dry overnight before scratching and sniffing.

STAR Research



Ben Hinnant, one of our STAR team members, completed his Master's thesis in December 2005. With the help of fifty-seven 5-year-olds and their mothers, Ben collected data for his thesis at the Family Research Center. Each child completed several tasks, some of which you may be familiar with, including having the child identify how a puppet is feeling in a particular story. The tasks the children completed measured the child's thinking ability, empathy, and ability to take another person's perspective both mentally and emotionally. Ben found that mental and emotional perspective taking were related to one another. His study also indicated that a child's emotional perspective taking skills were related to their level of empathy, but a child's mental perspective taking skills influenced the relationship between emotional perspective taking skills and empathy. Ben presented his work at the Conference on Human Development in 2006 and is publishing his research in a special moral development issue of the Journal of Genetic Psychology.



Keep in touch!

You can reach us at 336-334-4574 or visit@star4kids.org if your contact information address or phone numbers have changed. If you move out of the Greensboro area there are still ways you can participate. Thank You!



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