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THE Parenting Instructor

NEWSLETTER OF THE
NATIONAL PARENTING
INSTRUCTORS ASSOCIATION

SUMMER 1997

Inside

STATUS REPORT ON
PARENTING
EDUCATION IN USA

STEP PROGRAM
IMPROVED

OUTSTANDING
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WELFARE REFORM AND
PARENTING EDUCATION

PARENT TRAINING
SURVIVAL KIT

Greater Support from Washington for The Effective Parenting Movement

The beginning of Spring in Washington, D.C., with cherry blossoms blooming and a spirit of optimism in the air, was heralded in by public statements and educational gatherings that bode well for the Effective Parenting Movement to improve the overall quality of child rearing in the nation.

President Clinton led the way with stunning statements like those which follow. These declarations, which closely resemble those made by leaders in the parenting education field over the last thirty years, were embedded in an announcement in *Newsweek* Magazine about the Coalition for America's Children (1-888-544-KIDS). Mr. Clinton declared:

"Every day, I work hard to meet the challenges that come with being President of the United States. It's a tough job. But there's a tougher job than being the President. It's being a parent. With drugs, crime, and other problems facing our children today, it's tougher than ever being a good parent. It's a job that none of us can do alone."

By statements like this from the country's highest ranking official, the Effective Parenting Movement gains greater credibility. The Movement, which relies heavily on the use of parenting education programs that

are based on research into the conditions that help children to become healthy and productive adults, was also uplifted by an extraordinary event that took place in the White House in April. The President and the First Lady invited some of the country's premiere experts in child development to review the latest find-

ings on the way young children's brains develop and to discuss the implications for public policy and parental care.

The neurobiologists, physicians, and other specialists in early childhood development described research showing how quickly the brains of babies develop after birth, creating trillions of neural connections that either flourish or die off in response to experience. The vast majority of these synapses are found during the first three years of life.

"Experience is essential for brain wiring," said Carla Shatz, a professor of neurobiology at UC Berkeley, as she explained why it is essential for parents to touch, talk and read to, say and otherwise nurture and stimulate their babies.

The value of research in orienting parents how best to guide the growth of young children was also the focus of a special edition of *Newsweek* Magazine that hit the stands the same week as the White House meeting. This extraordinary edition entitled, "Your Child: from Birth to Three (Spring/Summer, 1997), contains the latest research findings and a series of very practical articles, such as "How to Talk Parentese

**"THERE'S A TOUGHER
JOB THAN BEING
THE PRESIDENT.
IT'S BEING A PARENT."**

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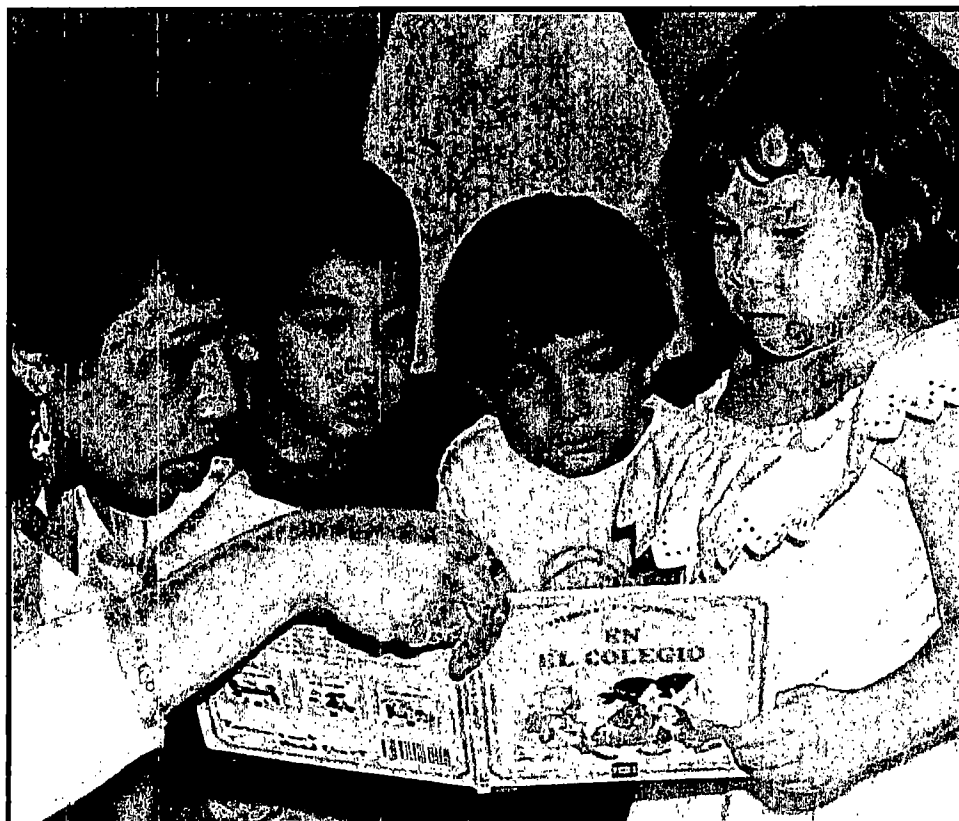
ZERO TO THREE

National Center for Clinical Infant Programs

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Caring for Infants and Toddlers in Groups: Necessary Considerations for Emotional, Social, and Cognitive Development



Subjects and Predicates

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This article is based on a plenary presentation at ZERO TO THREE's Eighth Biennial National Training Institute, December 4, 1993, Washington, D.C. Most of the content of this article comes from print and video materials of the Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers, described on page 7. Some statements are direct quotes from these materials.

Out-of-home child care for infants and toddlers, if done well, can enrich children's early experience. It can also be a therapeutic component of services to at-risk children, providing a safe and con-

sistent base for protection, prevention, and treatment.

Unfortunately although more and more children in this country are moving into group care at younger ages and for longer periods of time,* we are missing opportunities to provide quality care. Indeed, current practices in many infant/toddler child care settings actually hinder caregivers, children, and parents from forming and sustaining the deep, responsive, and respectful relationships that are the hallmark of quality.

In this article, we will examine two sources of problems in the management and planning of quality child care for infants and toddlers, and then explore six key components of early group experience: group size; quality of the physical environment; primary caregiving assignments; continuity of care; cultural and familial continuity; and meeting the

* According to the National Child Care Survey conducted in 1990 23 percent of babies under one year of age, 33 percent of one-year-olds, 38 percent of two-year-olds, and 50 percent of three-year-olds are cared for outside their home in regulated and unregulated family day care and in infant/toddler centers.

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