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OU receives \$560K grant for project to improve young students' self-regulation skills

Dr. Tomoko Wakabayashi, an associate professor of education in the Department of Human Development and Child Studies at Oakland University, has received a \$560,994 subaward for the U.S. Department of Education's Invest in Innovation (i3) Development grant awarded to the HighScope Educational Research Foundation.

The collaborative project aims to help preschool and kindergarten students increase their self-regulation skills.

"Self-regulation supports children's abilities to adjust behavior, control impulses and promote learning," Wakabayashi said. "These skills are considered important for children's social-emotional development and academic achievement, and related to children becoming socially responsible adults."

Wakabayashi will serve as co-principal investigator and co-director on the five-year project, which will include approximately 2,024 students across 88 classrooms in the Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD).

"We will collaborate with classroom teachers at DPSCD and use the latest research to enhance HighScope's curricular components – Plan-Do-Review (PDR) and Conflict Resolution (CR)," Wakabayashi said. "We will then train and coach additional DPSCD preschool and kindergarten teachers, monitor and assess implementation, and evaluate the impact of the enhanced PDR/CR on teachers and children."

According to Wakabayashi, the project builds on the results of HighScope's Perry Preschool Study, which was conducted from 1962 to 1967 in Ypsilanti, Michigan. In the study, approximately 123 low-income African American children between ages 3 and 4 were randomly divided into a program group that entered a high-quality preschool program based on HighScope's participatory learning approach, and a comparison group who received no preschool program.

As of 2005, the study found that adults at age 40 who underwent the preschool program had higher earnings, committed fewer crimes, were more likely to hold a job, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have a preschool education.

"It is speculated that the PDR sequence and emphasis on CR were the 'key ingredients' in improving the Perry children's abilities to plan, problem-solve and reflect on consequences, regulating their behaviors, which led to higher academic achievement and increased social responsibility," Wakabayashi said. "We're hoping we can demonstrate similar positive outcomes with children in Detroit."

While the Perry study was conducted with 3- and 4-year-olds, the new project will focus on preschool and kindergarten students.

"Infused with the latest self-regulation research, which did not exist when the HighScope curriculum was first envisioned for Perry in the 1960s, the enhanced PDR/CR will not only offer everyday opportunities to practice (self-regulation), but also ensure that teachers deliver PDR and CR more systematically, so that children will learn to integrate the strategies acquired through PDR/CR into their routine thoughts and actions, not just during the prescribed time of day," Wakabayashi said.

To assess the effectiveness of the project, HighScope will also partner with Michigan State University researchers who will serve as independent evaluators.

"The results of this project will ensure teachers have the tools they need to increase students' self-regulation abilities to support their academic achievement and to help them build the skills needed for lifelong success," said HighScope President Cheryl Polk, Ph.D.



Oakland University Professor Tomoko Wakabayashi recently received \$560,994 from the HighScope Educational Research Foundation as part of a collaborative project to help preschool and kindergarten students increase their self-regulation skills.

Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to support innovative approaches to impact student growth, close achievement gaps, decrease dropout rates, increase high school graduation rates, and increase college enrollment and completion rates.