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Bank Street College of Education Launches Early Childhood Policy Center

Straus Center for Young Children and Families will study the impact of child-centered learning, birth to age eight, across all settings where young children live and learn.

New York, NY -- September 21, 2015 -- Leading into its centennial year, Bank Street College of Education is establishing the Straus Center for Young Children and Families to produce and disseminate new research that will inform early childhood policy and practice.

The Straus Center will build an evidence base and provide policy guidance on effective approaches to care and education in child care settings, early learning and pre-Kindergarten programs, primary grade classrooms, and all of the settings where young children (birth to age eight) and their families live and learn.

In recent decades, a convergence of research from several fields, including neuroscience, has confirmed what parents and teachers have long known—that young children’s brains are primed for learning, making the early years a time of immense opportunity. Early experiences build a foundation for future learning by decisively influencing the architecture of the brain. But too often, opportunities are missed. Particularly in the nation’s historically underserved communities, the infrastructure to support optimal development and learning in the early years remains weak. New York City has begun to change that reality with its historic investment in early childhood education.

The Straus Center will contribute to accelerating effective practices in New York City and across the country by conducting research on strong early childhood models and policies from diverse perspectives. It will bring to bear current and new research on quality learning environments, develop supports for educators and families given the often disparate array of early childhood services, and utilize this research base to make policy recommendations.

“There is a need to investigate the questions that matter most to families, practitioners, and policymakers, who are in this work every day, and to communicate findings in a way that people understand and can apply to their practice,” said Shael Polakow-Suransky, Bank Street’s president. “New scholarship needs to solve real problems. In particular, there is still too little being done to enhance the prospects of young children living in poverty,” he said. “The Straus Center will help develop scalable models that address this challenge.”

The Straus Center is funded through a \$5 million gift from Lynn Straus, a graduate and longtime trustee of Bank Street College who has dedicated her life to developing quality supports and care for young children.

ABOUT BANK STREET COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

For one hundred years, Bank Street’s focus has been children: how they learn, what they need, what teachers need to help children learn, and what kinds of schools and communities learners of every age need in order to reach their full potential. Learn more at bankstreet.edu.