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Center for Optimized Student Support Researcher Awarded 3-year, \$150,000 Grant

Professor Eric Dearing to research impact of student support on immigrant children

Chestnut Hill, Mass.—July 27, 2011--[Eric Dearing](#), PhD, associate professor of applied developmental psychology at Boston College's Lynch School of Education, has been awarded a 3-year, \$150,000 Young Scholar award from the [Foundation for Child Development](#) (FCD) for his project, "Student Support in High-Poverty Elementary Schools and the Achievement of English Language Learners." This award is the first for the newly-renamed [Center for Optimized Student Support](#) at Boston College, which is dedicated to developing the most effective ways to address the out-of-school factors that influence how students learn and thrive in school.

Dr. Dearing's work will be focused on immigrant children who are English Language Learners (ELL) receiving student support through [City Connects](#), an intervention in 17 Boston public elementary schools that has proven effective in improving academic achievement and thriving for students. The school-based intervention uses student support professionals to collaborate with teachers in reviewing the strengths and needs of children in elementary schools and connects each student to a tailored set of prevention, intervention, and enrichment services in the community.

"Immigrant students who are learning English are the fastest growing group of students in US schools and, as a group, they face exceptional barriers to school success," said Dr. Dearing. "From a research perspective, this award is very exciting because it will allow me to take advantage of natural experiments and quasi-experiments as evaluation tools, providing the first careful examination of whether systematic student support can be used to promote the achievement of immigrant children."

The social and economic future of the United States depends increasingly on investments in the life chances of immigrant children. Nearly 25 percent of schoolchildren in the United States are immigrants or the children of immigrants who are disproportionately likely to grow up poor and attend schools that are not properly equipped to promote their learning. Dr. Dearing's study will inform policy decision makers on the value of systematic student support for improving the lives of immigrant children, in and out of school.

Dr. Dearing will focus on four specific research questions: (1) Is the achievement of immigrant children improved through systematic student support?; (2) Does child English proficiency moderate treatment effects such that English language learners demonstrate exceptionally positive treatment effects?; (3) Is the accuracy of special education referrals for immigrant children, particularly English language learners, improved by City Connects?; and (4) What is the optimal constellation of student support services for immigrant children?

"We are thrilled by this award, which will allow for deeper research into an important subset of students served by City Connects," said Mary E. Walsh, PhD, executive director of City Connects and director of



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the Center for Optimized Student Support. “Dr. Dearing’s research examining the challenges and opportunities for immigrant students will ultimately lead to improved achievement and thriving for these children.”

The FCD’s Young Scholars Program (YSP) focuses on understanding the changing faces of the nation’s children as reflected in the current demography of the United States. YSP seeks to support a new generation of scholars conducting research on the development of children in immigrant families from birth to age ten, particularly those who are living in low-income families.

About the [Center for Optimized Student Support](#)

The mission of the Center for Optimized Student Support is to study the most effective ways to address the out-of-school factors impacting student learning and thriving in schools. Based in the Lynch School of Education at Boston College, the Center develops, tests, and disseminates innovative practices that address these out-of-school factors (social/emotional, health, and family) by optimizing student support in schools. By promoting best practices, the Center, formerly the Center for Child, Family, and Community Partnerships, serves as a national resource for researchers, training programs, and professional development. The Center is directed by [Mary E. Walsh](#), PhD, the Kearns Professor of Urban Education and Innovative Leadership at the Lynch School of Education, Boston College.

About [City Connects](#)

Developed at Boston College in 2001, City Connects is an evidence-based approach to student support active in 17 Boston Public Schools that ensures that all children engage and learn in school by connecting each child with a tailored set of prevention, intervention, and enrichment services. By leveraging the resources of community agencies, City Connects works efficiently within the existing framework of schools and society to alleviate barriers to learning. In the 2009-10 academic year, City Connects facilitated the delivery of 13,000 services to 3,700 students in 12 Boston public elementary schools. Read the City Connects blog at [CityConnectsBlog.Wordpress.com](#) or follow City Connects on Twitter [@CityConnects](#).

About the [Foundation for Child Development](#)

The Foundation for Child Development is a national private philanthropy in New York City dedicated to promoting a new beginning for American education from PreKindergarten through 3rd grade (PreK-3rd). The Foundation promotes the well-being of children, and believes that families, schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and government at all levels share complementary responsibilities in the critical task of raising new generations.

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