

Policy Studies Graduate Research Conference

May 14, 2010

Presentation Abstracts

Name

Burden, Marcella

Abstract

Food, like water, shelter, and air, is one of the essentials of life. Yet in places all over the world, food supplies are scarce, unpredictable, or altogether unavailable. There are multitudes of reasons why food insecurity occurs, from environmental disasters to war to poverty and underdevelopment. Regardless of the circumstances of how it occurred, food shortages almost always most severely affect the least able to stand it, children and women. In view of this, why wouldn't providing food to the starving always be a good thing? In this paper I will attempt to show how the US's current food aid program not only doesn't adequately provide for food-insecure people, but often creates a cycle of famine and food aid dependency. I will also show a different method of providing food aid by describing Europe's methods and rationales. By analyzing two cases that demonstrate the current trend of local procurement and success through local purchase, I will provide policy recommendations for a more effective and efficient US food aid program.

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Name

Choi, Soo-Ah

Abstract

Lowering the minimum legal drinking age would have detrimental consequences for youth and communities throughout the country. Delaying the onset of first-use of alcohol is a critical public health strategy. Drinking before it is legal to do so is significantly more likely to lead to problems with alcohol down the road. This research aims to analyze the effects of youth-targeted alcohol control policies with particular focus on the MLDA law, and to emphasize the significance of delivering research and education on this matter. This capstone research project will explore the literature relating to public dissemination of information and changes in opinion/perception, and will interpret findings in light of the discussion of disseminating information regarding research on changes in the MLDA.

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Name

Crawford, Jessica

Abstract

Despite the existence of proven interventions to reduce the burden of infectious diseases such as malaria and diarrhea, these diseases continue to be among the top contributors to early mortality in much of the developing world. In an effort to reduce the burden of malaria and diarrheal disease in a rural community in Malawi, VillageReach, a Seattle-based NGO, implemented a community-driven project focused on improving prevention of disease and access to health care using proven interventions. This research aims to conduct an evaluation of the community-driven project. Using a combination of indicators collected from district-level and health center records together with results of a household survey, this research will assess whether or not the project is meeting its stated objectives to reduce malaria and diarrhea incidence in the community. The results of this research will have implications for project planning and management at many levels including the local and national government of Malawi as well as VillageReach. This research will contribute to the global health literature by providing a unique assessment of the health outcomes associated with a community-driven project.

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Name

Edwards, Craig

Abstract

It is posited that as technologies continue to develop resulting in overlap of departmental responsibilities, administrative costs can be reduced by mergers of these departments. Current literature suggests that institutions will continue to establish new departments which focus on specific areas of knowledge or tasks. However, traditional theories indicate that consolidation is the more appropriate strategy. This conflict between current and traditional theories gives management of organizations the task of choosing which strategy will best serve their organizations.

The University of Washington Bothell's consolidation of its Campus Media Center and Information Systems departments into a single department, Information Technologies, has followed the more traditional theories. Now that the consolidation of departments has been completed, upper level management wants to conduct a program evaluation to study the effects of this merger in the three areas of enhanced service, maintenance of costs, and better internal communication. Beyond the University of Washington Bothell Information Technologies department, an additional case study will give administrators of similar departmental consolidation decisions another point of reference for their policy decisions.

Through quantitative questionnaires administered to Faculty, Staff, and Students and a budget analysis, the follow research question is addressed:

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To what extent has the merger of the University of Washington Bothell's Information Systems and Campus Media Center departments into a single Information Technologies department:

1. Resulted in enhanced service to the campus?
2. Maintained costs while combining resources?
3. Lead to better internal communication?

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Name

Fredericksen, Allyson

Abstract

When the federal welfare system was reformed in the 1990s, changes were enacted to make federal support contingent on work, under the assumption that this would encourage welfare recipients to work harder and pull themselves out of poverty. Consequently, one of the major criticisms of the national welfare program is that this puts too much emphasis on getting recipients any job rather than on getting recipients good jobs to become financially stable.

In Washington State, some counties have seen more success than others in helping welfare recipients attain wages above the poverty line, and in moving recipients into unsubsidized employment resulting in earnings progression. Counties vary by community-level factors including, but not limited to, access to public transportation, housing costs, and population density. Community-level factors may play a role in determining whether or not counties are able to help recipients attain employment that has wages above the poverty line and/or that results in earnings progression.

Using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis, this study will examine the variability of community-level factors between counties and will attempt to determine which specific factors most correlate with higher wages and earnings progression for Washington's welfare recipients.

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Name

Leif Hansen

Abstract

The EU ETS is the largest multinational, carbon trading platform in the world and is a major cornerstone of the EU climate policy. The EU includes nearly 12,000 installations/enterprises that are mandated under the scheme to reduce carbon emissions. It is important that we understand how the abatement measures did or did not work during the first phase of trading (2005-2007) in order to ensure effectiveness in later phases.

Each country is given a disproportionately large amount of control when it comes to determining where their carbon allowances will go towards i.e. which installation/enterprise. The country then proposes their allowance figures in a National Allocation Plan (NAP) which the European Commission must then amend or accept.

Each country is faced with different environmental, economic, political, and even geographical forces which provide a unique set of characteristics that must be considered in the National Allocation Plan in order to meet their carbon reduction requirements. The purpose of this study will seek to interpret some of those different characteristics and the effect they had on overall emissions.

The methodology of the Capstone project will use verified emission data from Phase 1 of the EU ETS (2005-2007). The data will then be compared with country level data outlining the targets and the mechanisms used to reduce emissions to see if increases or reductions in emission

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from one year to other were met and propose answers as to what explains why reduction was or was not met.

The importance of identifying variables that affected a state's ability to reduce emissions within the EU ETS framework will ultimately help each country to identify and address these issues on a national level and apply the research towards correcting or continuing current methodologies of allocating allowances.

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Name

Houston, Kristen

Abstract

The Great Lakes Water Basin holds the largest system of fresh surface water in the world. It covers a total area of 244,000 km², larger than the entire state of Minnesota. With 6 quadrillion gallons of available freshwater, it is a life-sustaining and economic resource unlike any other in North America. With this amazing resource however, comes the important responsibility to manage and preserve it for sustainable use now and far into the future. Many different agreements and agencies have been developed over the past century to do just that; most recently with the passage of the 2008 Great Lakes St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact. The purpose for this research is to review the various agreements that led up to the 2008 Compact, and also the consumption pressures that the Great Lakes Basin experienced in the previous three decades to determine the necessity of the 2008 Compact.

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Name

Huang, Yi-Wen

Abstract

This proposal aims to examine the existing financial problems being experience in Taiwan after the implementation of the National Healthcare Insurance (NHI) program. This research also aims to discover what are the causes and effects and how they influence the whole system. This assessment will be complete by looking at the flows and processes of NHI in Taiwan, and comparing the similarities between Taiwan and the United States. The goal of this project is to identify possible adjustments the United States can make to avoid repeating Taiwan's financial mistakes. In this proposal, I will identify several approaches that have worked well for Taiwan and could probably be adapted to the unique healthcare system in the United States.

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Name

Jonasen, Mary

Abstract

Over one million 9th graders enter high school every fall and fail to graduate with their cohort four years later. The magnitude of this problem imposes immeasurable individual hardship as well as creating economic inefficiencies in society and a downward drag on productivity. This population of individuals in the U.S. who lack sufficient job skills and education to qualify for a job that earns above poverty-level wages continues to grow, resulting in higher rates of unemployment and under employment than any other single demographic group.

These inefficiencies matter because those unable to maintain self-sufficiency compete for the increasingly scarce resources to provide a social safety net. Programs for students to complete their high school education and receive job training are limited and excluded from the mainstream education system.

Five existing programs in Washington State are evaluated with respect to enrollment and completion rates, and through a comparison of programmatic features they share in common with nationally recognized high school completion programs with the objective of establishing 'best practices'.

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Name

Lawrence, Julia

Abstract

In the early 1990's, Washington State became one of the first states to pass dual-credit program legislation for high school students. Since its beginning, however, Washington's Running Start participants have failed to reflect the demographic of Washington state high school students. Fewer minority and low-income students participate in the program. While Washington State has recognized this disparity in several progress reports, no investigation has been completed to understand how low-income and/or minority students participate in Running Start, what services at the community college level are available to assist access and participation, and how participation can be increased in future years.

Through qualitative, one-on-one interviews with 4 current Running Start coordinators, this report strives to answer these questions. Running Start coordinators are uniquely qualified to give valuable perspective, for they not only act as advisors for Running Start students, but they are also the state's main contact for program administration. The Running Start coordinators interviewed represented Washington's diverse geographic divide of east versus west and rural and urban demographics. Publicly accessible information via community college websites was also analyzed to better understand how low-income and/or minority students and their families may access information on Running Start.

Research revealed support and services provided for low-income and minority students are extremely diverse, depending on both geographic location, urban versus rural setting, and demographics of surrounding population. Financial support, in the form of enhanced college fee waivers and textbook funds, for low-income students was consistent at all institutions, but varied in degree. Coordinators stressed the importance of outreach to their communities in order to provide more information about the program to increase minority and low-income student participation. Outreach methods involved not only the work of outreach coordinators at the community college, but also with establishing strong and viable relationships with existing local and federal programs already in place at area high schools and with high school counselors themselves. Coordinators also provided valuable insight on the state's role in participation of these students, revealing that conversations about this topic are numerous within coordinator circles, but there is a lack of direct and purposeful conversation on the topic from state leaders.

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Name

Lee, John

Abstract

For more than 60 years, America's labor law policy has remained mostly unchanged. Aside from a handful of related federal statutes and case law, the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (Wagner Act) and the Labor and Management Relations Act of 1947 (Taft-Hartley Act) embody labor policy in the United States.

Federal courts and the National Labor Relations Board have tried to adapt modern workplace conflict issues by applying this body of law. To address new challenges facing the American worker, including larger corporate employers, a declining union membership base, evolving national economy, Congress introduced the Employee Free Choice Act of 2007 (EFCA) to address some of the most pressing issues affecting employees, employers, and unions. The EFCA will reform how labor unions can be organized in the workplace. Reforms include specific changes to the processes and procedures for how labor unions can organize and become recognized collective bargaining entities.

This capstone project analyzes the proposed EFCA to better understand two issues: (1) whether the EFCA will effectively address issues and ambiguities continually revisited by federal courts and (2) if enacted, whether the EFCA will follow the Congressional intent of the Wagner Act and Taft-Hartley Act. In addition, the question of whether the EFCA would survive judicial scrutiny is examined. To answer these questions, a qualitative analysis is applied to jurisprudence from federal appellate courts and a literature review for relevant law journals and academic publications.

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Name

Matter, Keiko

Abstract

The Student Achievement Initiative is a performance funding initiative implemented by the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), in an effort to improve public accountability and student achievement through financial incentives among the 34 community and technical colleges in Washington State. Through defined student success measurables, each college accumulates points annually to report whether improvement has occurred in established areas. The SBCTC hopes this initiative will build a culture of evidence among the colleges, and will allow colleges to more readily identify best practices. It is unclear whether the Student Achievement Initiative results in an actual increase in student success, due to the efforts of a college's procedural changes, or simply an accumulation of points. Although the initiative has only been in place for two academic years, the present research will examine whether there is a significant positive effect on academic degree completion rates for all Washington State community colleges, as a result of the implementation of the Student Achievement Initiative in 2007-08.

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Name

Mayfield, Brandon

Abstract

A Qualitative Analysis of Digital Literacy and TechREACH Program's Curriculum Training and Implementation

Serving as an intervention strategy for the digital divide in low income communities and Washington's educational focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) among middle school students, the EdLab Group's TechREACH program is the subject of this research. TechREACH provides a project based learning curriculum for after-school or summer clubs targeting low income, at-risk middle school students from populations underrepresented in STEM careers. The primary aim of this research is to examine how program staff and adult participants understood and applied the concept of digital literacy within the curriculum training and program implementation. Although multiple conceptions of digital literacy are present in existing literature; the digital literacy within as a function of information technology fluency is the primary focus of this study.

Through qualitative research methods, staff and participants of the TechREACH program participated in semi-structured interviews, a focus group; while site observations, provided additional context to the program's current implementation and to observe digital literacy in practice. The findings highlight the themes of troubleshooting skills and TechREACH as a tool for building digital literacy capacity in program participants.

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Name

Micheel, Logan

Abstract

Washington State has implemented numerous laws and reforms to improve the criminal justice systems' response to sexual assault, and victims' experiences while participating in the criminal justice process. However, most of these policy actions are applicable only after a case is filed in Superior Court and/or a conviction is obtained. Thus, the effectiveness of Washington's laws partially depends upon the processing of sexual assault cases in the criminal justice system.

The purpose of my research is to explore the filing process for adolescent and adult sexual assault cases in King County and identify the various factors that influence prosecutorial decision making. Identifying these factors may provide the insight needed to meaningfully evaluate King County filing practices, while also providing information about how this sector of the criminal justice system operates. The criminal justice system is a central component of prevention efforts, and finding ways to improve the system's ability to remove perpetrators from society is vital to reducing the costs of sexual violence.

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Name

Miller, Shawn

Abstract

As Washington State entered into the 2009-2011 budget biennium legislators were faced with a near 9 billion dollar budget deficit and the difficult task of balancing the budget. Governor Gregoire approved an increase of tuition at universities of up to 14 percent and up to 7 percent for community and technical colleges. Faced with an ever increasing deficit entering into this latest legislative session, discussions and proposed legislation were introduced around increasing efficiencies in the higher education system. One of the proposals that surfaced involved mergers of institutions within the community and technical college system. The focus of this paper centers around whether or not economies of scale exist within the community and technical college system in Washington state. Finding evidence of economies of scale involves discovering proof that as an institution increases in size its average costs per unit will decrease. Using budget data from 2008-2009, regression analysis is used to determine what impact size as, measured by full time student enrollment (FTES) has on cost, as measured by administrative expenditures per FTES. The literature reviewed suggests that institutional culture too might impact the success of possible mergers. In order to address the impact of differences in institutional level variables the results of a multiple regression are examined to determine what these variables have on cost. The paper concludes with a discussion on the limitations of this study and suggestions as to what policy steps should be initiated and what additional areas need to be studied.

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Name

Moore, Meghan

Abstract

In response to a major budget deficit for fiscal year 2009, the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) was required to cut twenty-nine attorney and staff positions. This reduction in staff necessitated a reduction in caseloads in order to adequately prosecute serious offenses. To achieve this reduction, a change in felony case filing policy was enacted, which significantly altered the acceptance and processing of certain property crimes and drug offenses.

Data on case filings from 2008 and 2009 were compiled and compared to determine if the desired reduction in caseload occurred as a result of the filing policy change. Using case-weighting and workload measure formulas previously devised by the American Prosecutors Research Institute, actual attorney staffing levels were analyzed to determine if appropriate levels were being maintained. Additional data were gathered from Seattle, the largest municipal jurisdiction in the county, to determine if any negative externalities flowed to that court system as a result of the KCPAO's actions.

These results can be used to inform the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office for further evaluation of their policies in changing fiscal environments and may serve as an example to other prosecuting jurisdictions facing similar budget constraints.

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Name

Ortiz, Mariah

Abstract

Collaborative Social Change: A Transformational Approach?

To date, many development projects have not met their original goals. As cited by Easterly in *The White Man's Burden*, significant amounts of funding are spent every year, with limited results and success.

In light of this, the aforementioned pilot study examines principles of collaborative social change, transformational change and social capital, as related to development projects and social change organizations which serve vulnerable populations. Research methodology will involve a series of 10 -15 interviews with key players in social change organizations. The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- a) Is there any association between effective social change organizations and concepts of collaborative social change and social capital? If so, what?
- b) Is there evidence that merging concepts of collaborative social change, social capital and traditional models of social change would create more effective social change organizations?

The study hypothesizes that increased levels of collaborative social change and increased focus and emphasis on social capital could not only benefit social change organizations, but make them more effective and sustainable in the long term.

The interviews will serve to test this hypothesis: that the greater the level of collaborative social change and the greater the focus on social capital, the more successful and sustainable a social change organization will be. As organizational success is inherently difficult to measure; this study will rely on the following indicators of success 1) length of time organization has existed, 2) financial sustainability and diversity of funding, and 3) number of people served.

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Name

Pieters, Kristina

Abstract

Washington State loses approximately 23,000 acres of farmland every year due to an ever increasing pressure to develop valuable resource land for non-agricultural uses. With Population projections expecting another 2.2 million people to reside in Washington by 2030, it is imperative that farmland is protected. Continued loss of farmland in Washington will ultimately harm the state's economy and decrease the quality of life in the Pacific Northwest. Although Washington has farmland preservation programs currently in place to minimize the loss of land, more could be done to ensure agricultural security. This comparative study looks at Washington State farmland preservation programs utilized at the county level, the performance indicators used to measure program success, and how farmland is maintained once preserved. Surveying the 29 Fully Developing counties required to develop Comprehensive Plans for land preservation through the Growth Management Act should help determine success of the tools used to preserve farmland at the county level.

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Name

Rainey, Damian

Abstract

While a relationship between race and evictions is hypothesized, present data collection limits do not allow for the empirical analysis. Previous research examined options to obtain this data and tested the hypothesized relationship at the county and zip code level.

Using a combination of court records and census data, this project attempts to determine the appropriate geographical aggregation for analysis. In addition, this research also attempts to estimate racial impact at the micro level through the use of ecological inference models.

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Name

Reichert, Rachel

Abstract

The American public is expected to be more financially literate than in the past. One argument to help increase financial literacy is to provide education. In this paper state level introduced financial education bills from 2003 to 2007 were reviewed to identify trends in how the problem is framed and trends in the areas the education is legislated to address. In addition, variables that have a relationship to the bill passing were identified to create a regression model.

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Name

Rollins, Mary

Abstract

Food Policy Councils (FPCs) are springing up all over North America in order to address food system issues. The State of Washington recently passed legislation that would have made a State Policy Council law. The new council would have had representatives from many departments of State Government that are involved in food programs at some level, as well as private sector and university representatives. Through a veto of the bill, Governor Gregoire has instead chosen to promise to issue an executive order hoping to accomplish some of the same goals as the Food Policy Council. I will examine the governor's action of executive order in vetoing the bill and the reasoning behind the order.

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Name

Schrock, Andrea

Abstract

The purpose of this Capstone project is to evaluate the extent to which and how the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10's regional performance measurement framework aligns with and meets the goals defined for it under the EPA's National Strategic Plan as implemented through the Region 10 Scorecard. The relationship between the various levels of performance measurement in the EPA's on-the-ground programmatic work and its regional and national level public policy is key. I will conduct an extensive literature review and analysis of the Region 10 Scorecard and its accompanying survey, and a case study of select performance measures within the Office of Water and Watersheds. The final product of the Capstone project will be a process and management recommendation for an effective performance measurement tool or alternative for tracking, measuring and evaluating Region 10's performance.

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Name

Snare, Irina

Abstract

With estimated 57.6% of preschool children that have all parents in labor force (Children's Defense Fund, 2008), Washington's state working families have to rely on child care services on regular basis. Children from low-income families are at the greatest disadvantage when it comes to receiving high-quality preschool care, due to the sharp rise in costs for quality licensed care.

While children from low-income families are at the greatest disadvantage, all children in the state of Washington, who do not receive high-quality preschool care and education, are at risk for being not ready for school. "The first five years are a time of enormous social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth" for all children, and it is essential to provide them with a "safe, caring, and nurturing environment" (Brown, p.1) that has a structured program for early learning.

And while the House Bill 1152 states its goal as "to create an adequately financed, high quality, accessible, and comprehensive early learning system that benefits all young children whose parents choose it", there were no "compilation of systemic attempts to achieve high-quality early learning and care" (p. 3). The state of Washington, with its 296 school districts, has a "lack of a mandate for universal pre-kindergarten, and the availability of pre-kindergarten varies from school district to school district" (p. 5).

The main purpose of this paper is to forecast the feasibility of institutionalizing Universal pre-k program (UPK) in Washington State. And tie UPK to basic educational system in the state, make it publically funded, and systematically supported by the state, the same way that K-12 system is funded and supported in the state of WA. One of the "commonly used judgmental methods

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of projection” (Gupta, p. 212) is the feasibility assessment technique or (FAT). This technique is specifically useful “in forecasting the outcome of a contentious issue, fought by a number of interested parties” (p. 212).

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Name

Straub, Jaime

Abstract

My capstone project intends to assess the Safe Harbors program - King County's Homeless Management Information System - a federal mandate administered by the City of Seattle. Data is entered into the Safe Harbors HMIS by nonprofits within King County's Continuum of Care, as required by each individual nonprofits' funding contracts. Nonprofits are required to enter demographic and service data on homeless clients receiving services at these organizations. The program, which is relatively new, has undergone many recent changes, including a completely new interface within the past year and many changes in staff. As a new program, little assessment has been completed as to the program's effectiveness in the community and usability among nonprofits. For my MAPS Capstone, I administered a program assessment survey to reporting organizations in King County using Catalyst. Respondents had an opportunity to share thoughts on the current system and Safe Harbors as an organization, as well as ideas and recommendations for the future. Once coded and analyzed, I discuss the policy implications and program recommendations based on the survey results.

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Name

Taylor, Mari

Abstract

Early Childhood Education Programs: Effects on Families

Though the benefits to children's participation in quality early childhood education (ECE) programs are well established, families of children enrolled also reap benefits including connections to social services, parenting education, exposure to positive experiences within the public education system, and the development of personal connections.

Longitudinal analysis has revealed many quantifiable benefits to ECE families including higher incomes and increased education levels for parents (Ramey, C., Campbell, Burchinal, Skinner, Gardner, & Ramey, S., 2000). In a New Zealand study by Duncan, Bowdan and Smith (2005) researchers attempted to identify some of the qualitative effects for families, specifically whether participants perceive early childhood centers to improve family resiliency and coping skills.

Building on the work of Duncan, Bowdan and Smith, I conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve families of children enrolled in Snohomish County Early Childhood Education Assistance Programs (ECEAP) in four public elementary schools in order to examine ways in which quality early childhood programs may promote resiliency in families.

Qualitative analysis revealed meaningful insight into the program's effects on families. Many study participants credit their ECEAP staff and program with strengthening their child's academic and social skills, and also with helping to build on family strengths and increasing capacity for their own future success. These families' stories illustrate ways in which ECEAP has provided opportunities to strengthen skills around 1) understanding of the vital issues of personal agency and perseverance in contextualizing the challenges they are facing, 2)

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problem-solving skills and resourcefulness by linking families to available services and to the larger community, 3) reinforcing and improving positive communications strategies at home, and 4) building leadership and initiative skills in parents. Each of these common themes tap into some of the most critical aspects of resiliency defined in the literature.

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Name

Xiang, Joy

Abstract

This paper first reviews the roles of technology, technology transfer, and IPR in the global community's battle against climate change. The review concludes that the development and global deployment of clean technologies is crucial for addressing climate change. The review also concludes that IPR is a visible factor, though not a major road blocker, in global deployment of clean technologies.

The paper then analyzes and attempts to recommend whether and how the existing IPR regime should be adapted for addressing climate change. The resultant recommendations on whether and how the existing IPR regime should be adapted for developing and deploying clean technologies are based on 1) a comparative analysis of the differences existed in developing and deploying the pharmaceutical and clean technologies, and 2) a review of how the existing IPR regime has been adapted for addressing global needs of pharmaceutical technologies.