



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Thursday, Nov. 11, 2020

**Contact:**

Katie Parker  
Community Relations Specialist  
Cell: (580) 618-1551  
[kparker@okschoollreadiness.org](mailto:kparker@okschoollreadiness.org)

Mike Averill  
Communications Director  
Cell: (918) 557-9061  
[mike.averill@ou.edu](mailto:mike.averill@ou.edu)

**New Research and Policy Series to Address Issues in Early Childhood Education and Care**

OKLAHOMA CITY, OK (Nov. 11, 2020) – Oklahoma’s top early childhood advocacy group and the state’s only early childhood research institute are partnering to offer a new, multi-session conference to highlight early childhood research, initiatives, and policy.

“Building Equitable Futures for Oklahoma’s Children: An Early Childhood Research and Policy Series,” presented by Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) and the Early Childhood Education Institute (ECEI), is Dec. 9, Jan. 13 and Feb 10.

Each of these free, online webinars will feature multiple keynote speakers and introductory remarks from state leaders including State Superintendent Joy Hofmeister.

“Our goal is that these lectures will inform early childhood administrators, leaders, researchers, decision-makers and funders about current early childhood research conducted in Oklahoma with a focus on Pre-K studies, the state’s early childhood initiatives, and ancillary services and supports for the early childhood workforce,” said Diane Horm, ECEI director.

The ECEI, housed at the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa, is an applied research institute focusing on children ages birth through 8. For several years it hosted the Early Childhood Leadership Institute, an annual conference addressing myriad topics ranging from dual language learners and outdoor learning environments to assessing young children and understanding trauma and resilience.

OSPR, a nonprofit focused on strengthening families and ensuring all children are ready for school, has hosted its Oklahoma Research Symposium for several years. Previous conferences have addressed effective strategies for promoting equity, supporting Oklahomans living in poverty, and strengthening early care and education and child welfare partnerships.

By joining forces, leadership from both organizations anticipate having a stronger impact on a larger audience.

“Working with the Early Childhood Education Institute has expanded the reach of both of our organizations. This strong partnership will bring quality presenters and researchers to not only a

statewide audience but a national one that can help shape positive outcomes for young children and their families,” said Debra Andersen, executive director of OSPR.

The first session, titled “Foundations: How Oklahoma Research Influenced Pre-K Policies and Programs Across the Country,” will feature a presentation by Bill Gormley and Deborah Phillips on their ground-breaking pre-K study conducted in Oklahoma 20 years ago. Georgetown University’s Anna Johnson and the ECEI’s Sherri Castle will then present the preliminary results from their current research following a group of Tulsa children age 3 through 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Subsequent sessions in the series will focus on early childhood child and teacher well-being and equity in early childhood education.

“We hope this webinar series will bring valuable resources to the early childhood community by fostering discussion about lessons learned that can be utilized to better implement policies and initiatives focused on building equitable futures for all children,” Andersen said.

For more information, or to register for the event, go online to <https://okschoollreadiness.org/events/building-equitable-futures> or [www.ou.edu/tulsa/early-childhood-education-institute](http://www.ou.edu/tulsa/early-childhood-education-institute).

###

### **About Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OSPR)**

In 2003, House Bill 1094 created the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness and added Oklahoma to a growing list of states that recognized more action is required to successfully support families and children from birth to preschool — thus improving school readiness. Together, through both public and private partnerships, this group works to help children arrive at school with the knowledge, skills and physical and emotional health to achieve their dreams. Today, their mission is to lead Oklahoma in coordinating an early childhood system that strengthens families and ensures all children are ready for school. For more information, visit <https://www.okschoollreadiness.org>.

### **About the Early Childhood Education Institute (ECEI)**

The ECEI is an applied research group focused on young children, birth to age 8, their families, and their early care and education providers. Our team of researchers and data collectors specializes in longitudinal studies, understanding early childhood workforce characteristics, and piloting measures to examine early childhood practice leading to improved child outcomes. We have multiple ongoing projects designed to advance and support equity in early childhood through the generation, dissemination, and application of meaningful research. Our research is vital to our partners and the early childhood field to drive improvements in early childhood education while bettering the lives of the children it serves. The ECEI employs more than 40 staff and is located on the OU-Tulsa campus. For more information, visit [www.ou.edu/tulsa/early-childhood-research-institute](http://www.ou.edu/tulsa/early-childhood-research-institute).