

**CENTER OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY  
ON BASIC SKILLS**

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The Center for Research and Policy on Basic Skills at Tennessee State University is one of Tennessee's accomplished Centers of Excellence. Centers were established by action of the Tennessee General Assembly in 1984 to expand research and contribute to the overall economic and community development base of the state. The mission of the Center for Research and Policy on Basic Skills is to conduct multidisciplinary research and demonstrations concerning the practices, policies and programs of institutions and communities that influence the educational, social, physical, and psychological well-being of children and families. The Center produces and disseminates research and information to support the formation of public policy and the programmatic decisions of schools, agencies and communities in Tennessee and in the nation.

Center goals are:

To provide an environment and facilities to conduct significant research studies.

To demonstrate research capability which denotes the Center as accomplished among peer institutions and in the broader research community.

To disseminate research that has an impact on policies, programs and practices which can improve opportunities for children and families to succeed and strengthen community infrastructures.

The Center for Research and Policy on Basic Skills continues to expand its research agenda to achieve these goals as a part of Tennessee State University's commitment to excellence.

The Center has three research departments:

Academic Skills Acquisition  
Child and Family Studies  
School/Community Partnerships

The Center's research departments interface with the University's Bureau of Evaluation and Research Services (BERS). This unit administers projects and programs of a research, service, and academic nature. These provide laboratories and demonstration sites for conducting and disseminating research, promoting innovation, and enhancing collaboration with various agencies and organizations. BERS also provides linkages with funding agencies for accessing additional Center research funding.

Bureau of Evaluation  
and Research Services (BERS)

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The Bureau of Evaluation and Research Services (BERS) administers the Center's projects and programs which provide training, research demonstration projects, and/or research services to education and human service agencies as well as to other organizations. BERS units encompass research demonstration, continuing education, academic instruction, in-service training, consultation, training and public service activities. Several types of activities are administered and conducted through BERS, including activities related to specific grants and contracts, sponsored programs and projects, for example, The Teacher Enhancement and Materials Management (TEMM) Center provides professional development for teachers and school administrators, consultation, and material distribution on systemic

change in K-12 science education. Another project manages the Tennessee Multi-age Research Network, which provides professional development experiences in selected public schools. BERS also publishes research reports and educational/training materials. The units currently located in the Bureau are described as follows:

#### Tennessee CAREs

##### Early Head Start Program

The Tennessee Comprehensive Area Resource Efforts (CAREs) unit administers one of the original 68 national Early Head Start research and demonstration programs. The Early Head Start program focuses on prevention and early intervention with low-income children and families. The unique project provides and coordinates comprehensive, intensive, and continuous support services to enable families to attain self-sufficiency, while recognizing the integrity and unique needs of families and children. The Tennessee CAREs' unit also administers two of the newly funded (1998) State pilot preschool programs for low-income children. CAREs manages these programs for public school systems. Tennessee CAREs' goals encompass successful health, economic, and educational outcomes, and long-term academic success. The Early Head Start Program is funded by the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families and is part of the national laboratory for research on best practices for infant-toddler and family programs.

#### Tennessee Early Childhood

##### Training Alliance (TECTA) Program

The Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA) Program is part of the Research Policy Center's Child and Family studies research department. TECTA provides management and technical assistance to Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) institutions and consortia, who serve as subcontractors to implement a state-wide system of certificate and degree training programs for early childhood education teachers and administrators. TECTA includes center-based, family and group home preschool models as well as school age models.

#### Science and Technology Programs

##### and the National Science Foundation Project

The Center administers a hands-on science and technology consortium involving several Tennessee school systems through the Tennessee Hands-on Science and Technology Consortium (TSTC). Areas of emphasis include teacher and administrator enhancement, material management and evaluation. Additional Center/TSTC projects include school-community and private sector partnerships, and conferences, as well as coordination with state offices and federal projects.

The Center also administers one of the original 26 National Science Foundation's Local Systemic Change (LSC) Projects in partnership with Metro-Nashville Public Schools, and with Rutherford, Sumner, and Williamson County Schools. The project provides professional development for 3400 teachers and 149 elementary and middle schools to reform elementary science instruction. The Center houses a Teacher Enhancement and Materials Management (TEMM) Center which serves a multicounty region, distributing nationally validated science modules and hands-on, inquiry-based training for teachers and principals. The TEMM Center is a state and national model.

#### State Employee Child Care Center (SECCC)

The state's employee child care center is administered by the BERS through a contract with the state of Tennessee. The Center serves 72 children from 6 weeks through 5 years of age, and meets national accreditation guidelines set by the National Academy of Early Childhood Professionals. SECCC has provided qualified teachers and services to offer a quality early childhood education program for the last decade. SECCC is located at 110 Stockyard Street, in the downtown area.

#### Head Start State Training Technical Assistance Center

The State Training Center has operated as the principal training resource for Head Start Programs in Tennessee for several years. A variety of academic and continuing education courses and programs as well as training and technical assistance programs are offered to Head Start personnel and parents through contractual arrangements. The Center also provides services on a contractual basis to Head Start agencies and their grantees throughout the United States. Major programs include:

#### Child Development

##### Associate Training Program

The Child Development Associate (CDA) Training Program is a national credentialing effort to improve the quality of performance of individual staff members in their role as child caregivers. The program emphasizes competency-based instruction, including supervised field experiences. BERS administers the CDA program, and CDA courses are offered through the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. The CDA program is coordinated with the Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA) to promote degree preparation. In 1998, the Center's CDA program celebrated credentialing the 100,000th CDA in the USA, who completed her CDA program at TSU.

#### Social Services Competency Based Training Program

The Social Services Competency Based Training Program (SSCBT) is a national training program for the development of generic competencies through the improvement of job practice skills of human service workers. The program was developed through the BERS during a three-year research and evaluation project which resulted in the publication of a competency-based curriculum. In conjunction with the Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare, a Social Service Practitioner's credential is awarded to interns enrolled in the SSCBT program. BERS was funded to implement the program throughout the southeast and also has program adopters in several other states.

#### Business, Youngsters, Technology, and Education Consortium

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Director

The Business, Youngsters, Technology, and Education (BYTE) Consortium is a non-profit public service entity which provides the following services in the area of technology and learning: 1) teacher, parent and administrator training, 2) child enrichment classes, 3) research, 4) conferences, 5) technical assistance, and 6) a variety of public-private partnership programs.

The Consortium is administered through the Bureau of Evaluation and Research Services. The BYTE Consortium also sponsors programs which offer credit from the College of Education in the area of technology and learning and conducts statewide preschool projects with microcomputer demonstration sites in schools and preschool classrooms. The BERS has offered many services through its technology and learning laboratory supported through contributions to the BYTE Consortium. An advisory committee works with the Consortium on local, state, regional, and national programs.

#### School-Age Child Care Technical Assistance Office

Initiated in 1981 through a grant from the Wellsley College Center for Research on Women, this office continues to provide assistance to schools, organizations, and communities in Tennessee and the Southeast who are developing or conducting school-age child care programs. Special workshops, a library of resource material, and on-site technical assistance are available to organizations and community agencies. The office works directly with the editor of School-Age Notes in disseminating information to interested individuals and organizations.