

Summer 2021

FRIENDS

Project

Dear Families, Teachers, and Directors,

Happy Summer! This year was exciting for the FRIENDS project as our first group of children transitioned to kindergarten! We had so much fun catching up with families and hearing all about children's new adventures in kindergarten. We also greatly enjoyed meeting our new group of preschoolers virtually! We cannot thank all our participating families enough for continuing to adapt to remote data collection procedures throughout the year. We know that Zoom interviews and at-home cortisol collection are time consuming and we are so grateful for families' dedication to the project!

We sincerely appreciate school directors and teachers going above and beyond to recruit new preschool families when we were unable to come to the centers. This year we also had amazing participation from kindergarten teachers. We could not do this project without everyone's flexibility and willingness to participate!

With gratitude,
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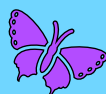
FRIENDS Summary

Children Participating: 129

Preschools Participating: 13

***In this issue you may read about our next steps and how to send us your child's kindergarten information.**

Also, check out some preliminary findings & learn about our staff changes.



Looking Ahead . . .

In the fall, we will be recruiting our third cohort of preschoolers! We will also be following up with children who transition to kindergarten in the late fall/winter. We cannot wait to hear how the transition to kindergarten goes!

Currently, we plan to continue collecting data remotely, but if conditions change at our partner centers, we may be able to return to school-based collection. Our new cohort will be invited to participate in at-home cortisol collection and Zoom interviews. We will be inviting kindergarteners to participate in Zoom interviews. There is no at-home cortisol collection for our kindergartners. As with every timepoint, we will be asking parents and teachers to complete Qualtrics reports online.

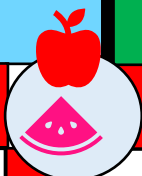
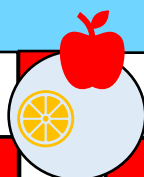
If your child will be transitioning to kindergarten this fall, we will be contacting you to obtain your child's kindergarten teacher's information. We will ask kindergarten teachers for teacher reports. Please contact us with this information via phone or email, or you can click [here](#).

Activity Ideas

- ☀ Make [bubbles](#)
- ☀ Collect some specimens from nature, [describe](#), and examine them
- ☀ Go on a picnic!
- ☀ Make [popsicles](#)

What color are the

Apples	_____
Grapes	_____
Oranges	_____
Watermelon	_____



Preliminary Findings

One topic the FRIENDS project is interested in is how children's levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, is associated with school readiness. We collected a standard measure of cortisol - saliva - as well as two newer measures - hair and fingernail clippings! Cortisol in saliva is thought to represent a measurement of children's stress at the moment it is collected, whereas cortisol in hair and nails may reflect long-term levels of stress. Preliminary analyses from the FRIENDS project showed that all three of these indices are associated with one another, providing evidence of the validity of these hair and nail samples.

We are also interested in how this aspect of children's biology is associated with other aspects of children's behavior. We found that children with higher levels of hair cortisol (i.e., higher chronic stress) in preschool showed more anger and physical aggression (i.e., hitting, kicking), and less prosocial behavior (i.e., sharing, helping) one year later in kindergarten! These results demonstrate that biology may impact children's behavior across this transition.

Finally, the FRIENDS project is interested in social-emotional functioning across the transition to kindergarten. In the first group of FRIENDS children followed from preschool to kindergarten, teachers reported somewhat stable levels of self-regulation, aggression, and anger across the transition to kindergarten. Additionally, children who showed higher levels of anger and physical aggression in preschool tended to show lower levels of prosocial behavior in kindergarten. This highlights how children's social and emotional functioning in preschool may continue to influence their behavior as they enter school.

Lab Updates

- ☀ Research assistants, Ariana DeJesus-Rodriguez and Julia Kiefer, presented their Honors projects at the Western New York Undergraduate Psychology Conference; Ariana also presented her poster at the McNair Scholars Conference.
- ☀ Kristin Perry successfully defended her dissertation and will be on internship next year at the University of Mississippi Medical Center
- ☀ Katherine Foote will be pursuing her M.D. at the University at Buffalo
- ☀ Danielle Rice will be pursuing her Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies at Penn State University
- ☀ Sarah Nowalis will be pursuing her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at Bowling Green State University
- ☀ We welcome 3 new staff to the project and lab: Katy Gardner (Colgate University graduate), Sarah Lucas (Allegheny College graduate), and Kristin Tymchak (UB MA in School Psychology graduate)

Research Assistant Graduates

- ☀ Ariana DeJesus-Rodriguez will be pursuing her Master's degree at Fordham University
- ☀ Julia Kiefer will be pursuing her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of Arkansas
- ☀ Erin Dougherty will be pursuing her Master's degree in school psychology from the University at Buffalo



FRIENDS Project Team

Principal Investigator

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Gretchen Perhamus (Project Director)
Emily Verdaasdonk

