

PEERS2K PROJECT

SUMMER 2023

University at Buffalo
Social Development Lab

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Dear Families, Teachers, and Directors,

I hope you all had a great summer! This year was exciting for the PEERS2K project as our second group of children transitioned to kindergarten! We had so much fun catching up with families and hearing all about children's 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 help us learn about the important transition to kindergarten. We know that participating in our project takes time and we thank you for your support and dedication to the project. We also thank all the families who came into our lab and participated in our second round of psychophysiology appointments!

We sincerely appreciate school directors and teachers going above and beyond to help us recruit preschool families. We also thank you for your help in spreading the word and our flyer (see page 5) to increase our participation in the community. We also thank all the participating kindergarten teachers. We could not do this project without everyone's help and willingness to participate!

With gratitude,
Dr. Jamie Ostrov
Director, UB Social Development Lab

ARTS AND CRAFTS ACTIVITIES:

- Foam painting
- Make your own paint
- Create a nature mosaic
- Rainy day splatter painting.

WHETHER IT'S ART,
SPORTS, OR
READING, DO
WHAT YOU LOVE!

LOOKING AHEAD...

In the early spring of 2024, we will be recruiting our fourth cohort of preschoolers! If you know any kids who will be in preschool during this upcoming year and plan on moving up to kindergarten during the fall of 2024, let them know about our project (see page 5 for our flyer)! We will also be following up in the fall of 2023 with our participants who are moving up to kindergarten. We cannot wait to hear how the transition to kindergarten goes!

We will be inviting kindergarteners to participate in Zoom interviews this fall. As with every timepoint, we will be asking parents and teachers to complete Qualtrics surveys online (or paper reports if that is preferred).

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 brief teacher reports for which we pay them. Please contact us with this information via phone or email, or you may [click here](#).

**DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE
SPORT?**

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

PEERS2K is interested in how peer behavior in preschool is associated with school readiness during the transition to kindergarten and subsequent school functioning.

Preliminary analyses showed that children in our project engaged in high levels of prosocial behaviors (e.g., sharing, cooperation) during preschool. This is great news given that higher levels of prosocial behaviors in preschool was associated with higher school engagement in kindergarten. Children who are highly engaged in the classroom tend to have a positive attitude towards school and are enthusiastic to learn.

This project was also interested in how parenting is associated with school readiness and children's social skills. Preliminary analyses showed that our sample is generally high in positive parenting, which is characterized by warmth/support as well as setting consistent and appropriate limits. Further analyses demonstrated that higher levels of positive parenting was associated with increases in child prosocial behaviors and decreases in both physical (e.g., hitting, kicking) and relational (e.g., excluding peers) aggression. Along with social behaviors, warm and supportive parenting was also found to predict decreases in anxiety and negative emotionality (e.g., sadness). These findings highlight how parenting can have a lasting impact on children's social skills and general well-being.

A unique aspect of PEERS2K was the measurement of children's physiology (e.g., heart rate), which allows us to understand how the body biologically reacts to stressors. Our lab developed a new assessment for young children that measures children's physiological response to social exclusion. Preliminary analyses indicate that this assessment is working as intended, suggesting it is a valid measure that can be used in our new intervention project.



Count the books!

- **The Social Development Lab will begin a new project this fall, The Early Childhood Friendship Project. You may learn more about it [on our website](#).**
- **Bri Memba** passed her dissertation defense and was the runner-up for the Bugelski Psychology Dissertation Award, presented a talk at SRCD, and has begun her Clinical Psychology Doctoral Internship at University of Chicago Medicine (UCM).
- **Gretchen Perhamus** received the SUNY GREAT (Graduate Research Empowering and Accelerating Talent) Award to further support her excellence in research and professional development, and presented two talks at SRCD.
- **Katy Gardner** will be attending UB's Clinical Psychology graduate program this fall under the mentorship of Dr. Ostrov, and presented a poster at SRCD about her independent project on the interactive role of physiological reactivity and behavior on internalizing symptoms in early childhood.
- **Sarah Lucas** presented a poster at SRCD on the effects of self-regulation and salivary alpha amylase (i.e., an enzyme that measures the nervous system) on aggression and bullying in preschool.
- **Kristin Tymchak** has been promoted to a new role as Project Coordinator of The Early Childhood Friendship Project (ECFP-3) in the lab.
- **Margaret "Maggie" Azu** will be joining us as a Ph.D. student in Clinical Psychology this fall and most recently worked at the Yale Child Study Center.
- We are welcoming 3 new staff to the lab: **Olivia Bell** (Buffalo State University), **Claire Shroder** (SUNY Geneseo), and **Julianne Zajdel** (West Virginia University).

Research Assistant Graduates

- **Ava O'Hara, Hayley Feibel, and Faith Gallivan** graduated from UB. Hayley will be attending UB's School Psychology MA program this fall, and will continue to work in Dr. Ostrov's lab on the FRIENDS and PEERS2K Projects. Ava will also be attending UB's School Psychology MA program this fall.
- **Olivia Bell** graduated from Buffalo State University, presented a poster at SRCD, and has joined our lab as a Research Tech on the FRIENDS Project.

Lab Publications

Ostrov, J. M., Murray-Close, D., Perry, K. J., Perhamus, G., Memba, G., Rice, D., & Nowalis, S. (2023). Parenting and adjustment problems among preschoolers during COVID-19. Preregistered (09/2020) *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 32, 93-109. doi: 10.1007/s10826-022-02439-2; PMID: 36157198

Perry, K.J., Perhamus, G. R., Lent, M. C., Murray-Close, D., & Ostrov, J. M. (in press). The COVID-19 pandemic and measurement of preschoolers' executive functions. *Psychological Assessment*.

PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATORS

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Vermont

RESEARCH TECHNICIAN

Katy Gardner
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GRADUATE STUDENTS

**Gabriela Memba (PEERS2K
Project Director)**

Gretchen Perhamus
(FRIENDS Project Director)

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH ASSISTANTS



**Jenny McCarthy, Zoe
Morrisey, Amy Maslin**
(Head RA)

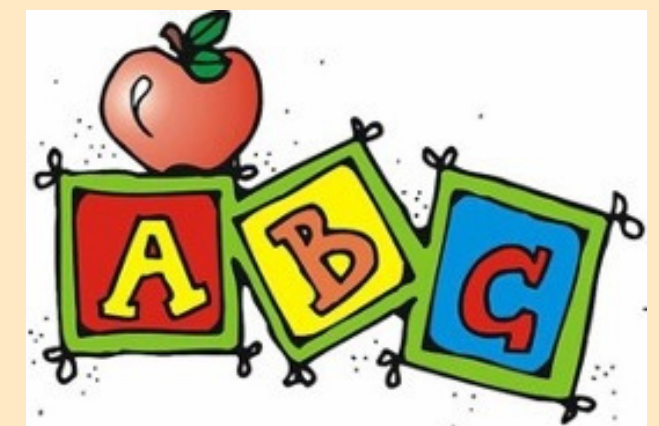


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Do you have a child in preschool and attending kindergarten next year in Erie or Niagara County?

If so, please help us learn more about the transition to kindergarten.

**Families may earn up to \$140
in gift cards.**



**Please scan to learn more and
join the PEERS2K Project!**

**Questions: email devlab@buffalo.edu
or call (716) 645-0213**

**Additional information may also be found on our
website: <http://ubwp.buffalo.edu/socialdevlab/>**