

- Home
- Upcoming Events
- In the News
- Faculty, Staff & Programs
- Student News
- Research News**
- Alumni News
- Outreach & Engagement News
- Archive
- Note from the Dean
- About the Educator
- Submit an Article
- Contact Us

Research News

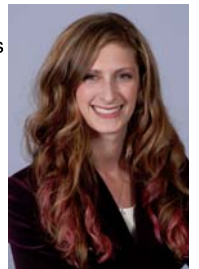
[Email](#) [Print](#) [Share](#)

Assistant Professor's Research Studies Factors to Help Infants and Toddlers with Healthy Emotional Development

Jun 1 2014 | [Return to article list](#)

BY ANNIE MURPHY

Erika London Bocknek, Ph.D., assistant professor of early childhood education in the College of Education, has been at Wayne State University for less than a year, but in that time she has made tremendous progress toward establishing her research agenda and setting up an active and productive laboratory. Dr. Bocknek has teamed with faculty in the College of Education (Janice Hale, Ph.D., Francesca Pernice-Duca, Ph.D.), the School of Social Work (Carolyn Dayton, MSW, Ph.D.), the Department of Psychology (Chris Trentacosta, Ph.D.), and the School of Medicine (Francesca Luca, Ph.D.). Additionally, she teams with colleagues at Pennsylvania State University, the University of Michigan and Michigan State University to conduct her research.



"I came to Wayne State to be part of the urban mission and be engaged with the community through my research, teaching, and practice."

Dr. Bocknek researches the role that parenting, family, school, and community factors play to help infants and toddlers have healthy emotional development. She is specifically interested in emergent emotion regulation skills in toddlerhood, as the ability to identify and cope with emotions helps children develop healthy competencies in almost every other domain, particularly early learning readiness. In her current study of which she is the principal investigator, *Toddlers' Emotional Development in Young Families* (TEDY), Bocknek is adopting a bio behavioral approach to the study of emotion regulation and investigating family-level predictors of developing competencies. Two-year-old children and their families will visit Bocknek's research lab to participate in a series of play-based research tasks. Findings from previous studies demonstrate that young children benefit from a perception of organization in their families, particularly when parenting roles are predictable and when rituals and routines are consistent. This previous research was conducted with Early Head Start families and significantly informs practice by underscoring the need for early educators and interventionists to support young children's emotional development and by highlighting the role that the child's context plays in predicting developmental outcomes. Applying findings from Bocknek's research can result in helping children to harness resilience by supporting the child's entire family.

Located in the Skillman Building (at the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute), Bocknek's research laboratory involves undergraduate and graduate students from WSU's College of Education, Psychology Department in the College of Liberal Arts and Science, and the School of Social Work. It is a hands-on, interactive learning community environment in which students collaborate on TEDY as well as smaller, ongoing research projects. Students are gaining and refining skills through direct experience with toddlers, administering early childhood assessment protocol, as well as developing research skills.

Dr Bocknek was awarded the first-ever Hiram E. Fitzgerald Emerging Scholar/Researcher Award by the Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health in 2009. In 2012, she was awarded the Todd Ouida Clinical Scholar Award by the University of Michigan Department of Psychiatry and Depression Center. And, in 2014, she was the invited keynote speaker at the annual state conference of the New Jersey Coalition for Infants and Toddlers, delivering the presentation, "Magic moments and early development: Supporting infant and toddler learning through relationships." Additionally, Bocknek is the guest editor of a special issue on Young Children and Their Fathers in

the *Infant Mental Health Journal*. Along with colleagues, she is currently reviewing a set of interesting manuscripts that will make an important contribution to the science in this area, which is expected to be published in the fall, 2014.

Dr. Bocknek, who teaches ELE 6090: Introduction to Infant Mental Health, is faculty in the Infant Mental Health Dual Title Program and the director of the Family Resilience Laboratory. She received her doctorate in Child Development/Human Development Family Studies with an interdisciplinary graduate specialization in Early Childhood at Michigan State University in 2009. "I'm eager to continue becoming part of the college, university and Detroit communities in a meaningful way," she says, "and focusing on developing partnerships with community organizations so that my work can make an impact on the lives of young children and their families in this area."

[[Annie Murphy, Ph.D.](#), Assistant Professor – Research in the College of Education and a member of the college's Communications Team.]

[Return to article list](#)