



INSTITUTE *for*  
RESEARCH *on*  
POVERTY

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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# Taking Your Poverty Class to the Next Level

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**Is it Possible  
to Get Research on  
Early Childhood Development  
into the Hands of Policymakers?**

# Family Impact Seminar on The Science of Early Brain Development

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- Art Rolnick, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and Economist with the Federal Open Market Committee
- Pat Levitt, Provost Professor of Neuroscience, Psychiatry, and Pharmacy at the University of Southern California
- Dave Riley, a Rothermel-Bascom Professor of Human Ecology at UW-Madison/Extension

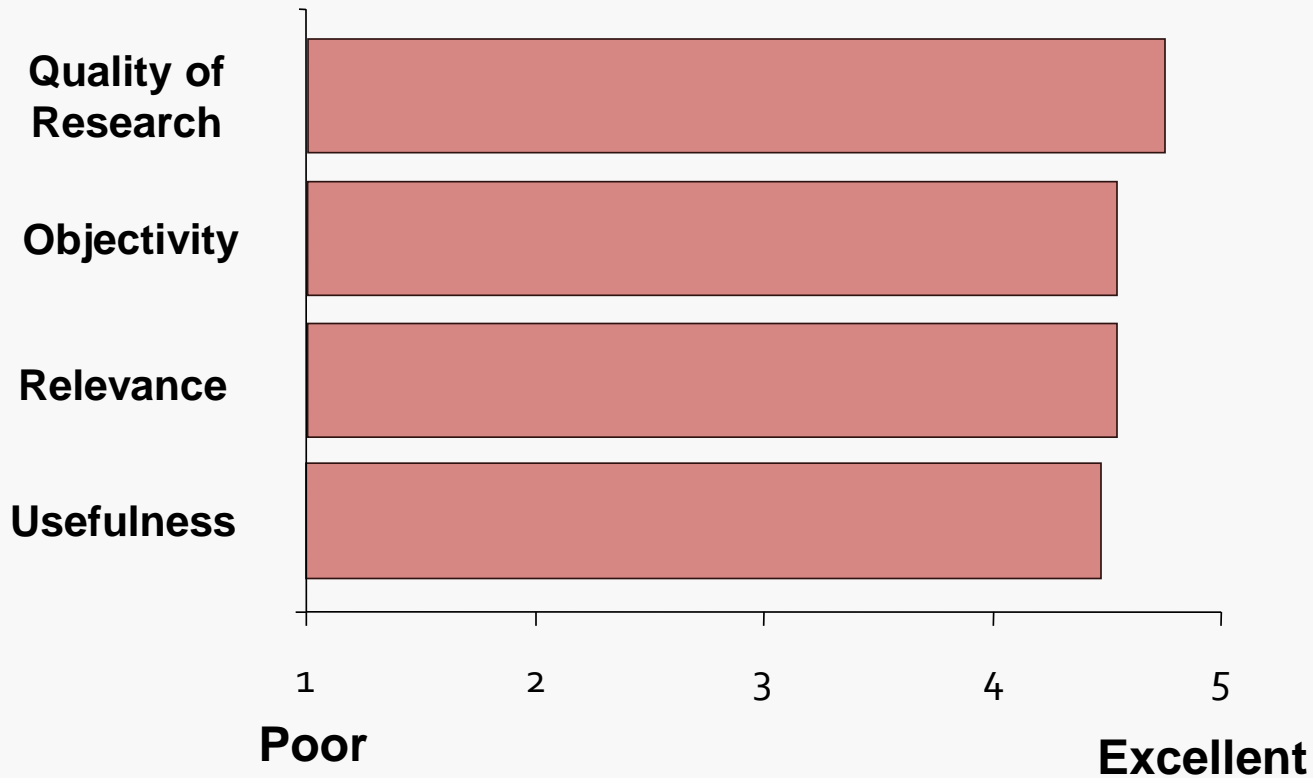
# (1) If We Offer Research on Early Childhood, Will Policymakers Come?

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The seminar attracted 98 participants including:

- 26 legislators & 20 legislative aides
- 22 legislators at a discussion session
- 38 different legislative offices
- 3 Supreme Court Justices, including the Chief Justice
- Wisconsin's First Lady
- Two state secretaries, 4 assistant deputy secretaries, and 2 assistant deputy secretaries
- 10 analysts from nonpartisan legislative service agencies

## (2) How Did Policymakers Rate the Research? (N=74, 76% Response Rate)



# (3) What Value Did State Legislators See in the Research?

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- The information was such that it is not generally out there. If you don't go to a seminar, you won't hear it. The science of it was really interesting to me.  
(Legislator)
- I really learned a lot . . . It will help in the future to produce policy that's the best in the field, using the available evidence.  
(Legislator)
- I was really surprised by how many legislators were there from both houses and from both parties . . . There will be a lot more opportunity to get policy on this issue that is truly bipartisan.  
(Legislator)

# (4) How Did Legislators Use the Research on Early Childhood?

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- Two legislative leaders lobbied for a follow-up study committee that met several times;
- One legislator introduced seven different pieces of legislation on early childhood at the Governor's Council on Workforce Investment; and
- Legislators raised early childhood in speeches and comments at the First Lady's Fostering Futures Initiative; the Jobs, Economy, and Mining Committee; the Heroine Task Force; the Safe Kids' meeting; with local coalitions; with the business community; with constituents, lobbyists; etc.

*"We are well past the time when it is possible to argue that good research will, because it is good, influence the policy process."*

—Ray Rist, 1994, p. 546  
U.S. General Accounting Office



# Keys for Building Research-Based Policy Decisions

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- (1) Conceptualize policy work, not as disseminating information to policymakers, but as developing relationships with them.

# Keys for Building Research-Based Policy Decisions

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- (1) Conceptualize policy work, not as disseminating information to policymakers, but as developing relationships with them.
- (2) Respond to what policymakers say they need and want—not more information, but more nonpartisan and reliable information

# Teaching Resources

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*Evidence-Based Policymakers: Insights from Policy-Minded Researchers & Research-Minded Policymakers*  
by Karen Bogenschneider & Tom Corbett (2010)

- Chapter 9 – Key Insights on How to Communicate Research Evidence to Policymakers
- Chapter 2 – Do Policymakers Want Research?
- Chapter 19 – How to Communicate Research Evidence Using the Dispassionate Nonpartisan, Educational Approach
- Chapter 7: What Researchers Should Know about the Policy Process

# Teaching Resources

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*Family Policy Matters: How Policymaking Affects Families and What Professionals Can Do*

by Karen Bogenschneider (2014, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)

- Chapter 1 – How Youth Have Used Policy to Change the World
- Chapter 11 – What Policymakers and the Policy Process are *Really* Like
- Chapter 13 – The Impacts and Insights Generated by the Family Impact Seminars Across the Country

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One Important Message  
Instructors Can Convey  
to Students  
is  
**HOPE!**