

# WISCONSIN TWIN RESEARCH NEWSLETTER

Spring 2003, Vol. XXI

Published by: UW Twin Center



## The Transition to School: One Classroom or Two?

When it is time to enroll twins in school, one of the most difficult challenges facing parents is deciding whether to separate them or keep them in the same classroom. There is no definitive answer to this question, as the decision varies from family to family.

Schools usually prefer to separate twins. This decision is based on a belief that separation helps to develop individuality. Parents, on the other hand, often prefer to have their twins in the same classroom to make the transition to school easier. Up to this point, the twins may have spent most of their days together, so separation would be even more stressful for them than for the average kindergartner.

Given that schools and parents often disagree, it may be necessary for you and the school to decide together which option is best for your family. If you feel strongly that your twins should be together, try suggesting that the twins stay together in kindergarten and then re-evaluate separation each subsequent year.

You may also benefit from discussing these issues with other parents of multiples who may be able to offer insight on how their twins have developed either separated or together. Keeping the twins together may be best for some children, but not for others.



Consider the following factors when deciding which choice is best for your twins:

- The skill level of each child.  
Teachers and peers often compare twins' abilities to one another. For example, if one twin excels at sports while the other twin is average athletically, s/he may feel it is more noticeable in comparison to the twin.
- The ability of the twins to interact with other children.  
Although many twins are each other's closest friends, they still need to be able to develop relationships with other children. If the twins are interacting only with each other, it may be best to separate.
- Any extenuating circumstances in their lives that would make keeping the twins together a necessity.  
For example, are there any stresses in the twins' lives (e.g., divorce or death) such that they may need each other for support and reassurance?
- The thoughts and feelings of the children.  
Parents as well as educators need to ask the twins if they are looking forward to separation or dreading it. A separation of twins who rely very heavily on each other may cause more stress than keeping them together.

Always remember that you know your children better than any teacher or principal. If necessary, back up your opinion with examples and stories of your twins.

## What IS the Wisconsin Twin Project?

Although this newsletter is sent to all families with twins born in the state of Wisconsin since 1989 who have agreed to participate, there are actually three different twin projects currently being conducted! Here is a summary of each project:

### GEO (Genetics of Emotional Ontogeny)

Families who participate in GEO usually live within 60 miles of Madison. This study involves several visits to our lab or to the families' homes during the first three years of life.

### WTP (Wisconsin Twin Panel)

Families who are outside of the 60 mile radius for GEO participate in WTP.

Phase 1: This phase takes place when the twins are about 2 years old. It involves a phone interview and a mailed packet of questionnaires concerning the twins' social, emotional, and language development.

Phase 2: This phase takes place when the twins are 6 or 7 years old. Participating families receive a questionnaire packet that asks about the twins' behavioral and emotional responses to everyday situations.

Phase 3: This phase takes place when the twins are 7 or 8 years old. If a family is selected to participate, it involves phone interviews, as well as a four-hour visit to the family's home where games are played with the twins.

Phase 4: Currently being planned!

### APHECT

Families who participate in APHECT most likely have also participated in either GEO or Phases 1 and 2 of WTP. This study looks at the behavior and biology of 6- to 9-year-old twins.

First, a team of staff members visits the family's home for about two hours and plays games with the twins. About a week later, the family is asked to come to Madison and participate in a center visit. This second visit looks at the biological and physiological development of the twins by recording such things as brain waves and heart activity, while the children are playing some more games at our lab.

If you are unsure which project you are participating in, feel free to contact us using the information on the following page.

## Twin Studies from Around the World

Did you know that twins are studied all over the world for a variety of different types of research? In October 2002, the journal *Twin Research* was dedicated to describing twin studies from around the world. Here is a sampling of just some of the ongoing studies:

- The Netherlands Twin Register follows the development of twins throughout their lives and studies genetic and environmental factors involved in the development of "Type A" personalities, and "thrill-seeking" personalities, among other types. They also study the development of phobias, substance abuse, religious affiliation and leisure activities.
- In Italy, the lifestyles and sports activities of twins of all ages are measured in research on health and aging.
- The Norwegian Institute of Public Health Twin Panel studies such topics as the genetics of epilepsy and pain sensitivity in adult twins.
- In northern England, records of twin births are studied to see how often and how soon doctors detect multiple births.
- The Australian Twin Registry studies twins of all ages for psychological and genetic research, including the genetic risk factors for heart disease and skin cancer, as well as the genetic predisposition to baldness.
- In Finland, adolescent twins are studied for predicting genetic and environmental factors involved in alcohol use, allergies and asthma.
- The Seoul Twin Family study in Korea measures different aspects of personality development, cognitive ability, interests and talents of twins of all ages.
- Another British study, the St. Thomas UK Adult Twin Registry, studies the genetics of osteoporosis, arthritis, body weight, skin problems and eye problems in twins of all ages.
- The UCLA twin study looks specifically at the genetic and environmental factors involved in the social and moral development of young twins.
- A New York twin panel studies the genetic and environmental influences in child eating habits and obesity.
- A Washington, DC study collects data from World War II veterans who are twins about their habits, preferences and lifestyles.
- And last, but not least, the Wisconsin Twin Project studies the emotional development of young twins!



## TWIN FACTS (about you)

### GEO

Since GEO started in 1993, **479** families have completed the study, and about **224** families are currently participating.

### WTP

#### General

Currently, over **4038** families have agreed to participate with WTP.

#### Phase 1

Since 1997, about **2140** families have participated.

#### Phase 2

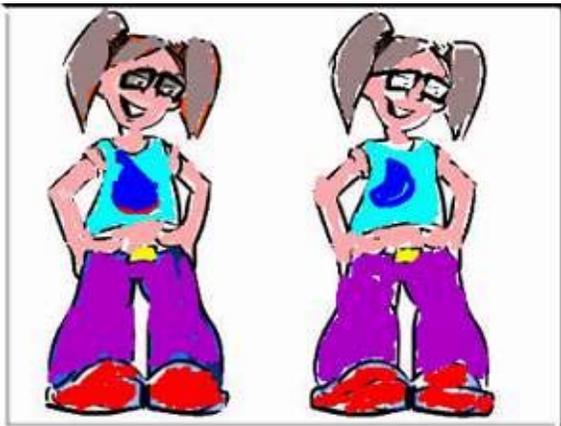
Currently, over **238** families have participated.

#### Phase 3

So far **276** families have participated in Phase 3, and we have done home visits with **218** of those families.

### APHECT

Since APHECT first started in January 2001, **97** families have completed the study.



## How to Keep in Touch ...



*By Mail:*

Wisconsin Twin Project  
University of Wisconsin- Madison  
Waisman Center  
1500 Highland Ave  
Madison, WI 53705



*By E-mail and on the Internet:*

wisconsinwins@waisman.wisc.edu  
<http://psych.wisc.edu/wtp>



*By Phone:* (608) 265-2674

**\* Please let us know if your address or telephone number changes so we can stay in contact with you. \***

## Questions...

## Questions...

## Questions...



As parents, you have a wonderful perspective that we could never capture in a short visit here to the Twin Center or at your home, and as experts in your children's development, we highly value your input! We appreciate the time you take in filling out questionnaires. Each piece helps to further the field of child development.

**THANK YOU!**