



Centre for Inclusive Education Newsletter

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Message from the Director: Dr. Jacqueline Specht

- **Our mission:**
to enhance educational opportunities for all students with exceptionalities.
- **The Centre is committed to sharing research findings and resources with academics, educators and families.**

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Centre for Inclusive Education. Our Centre has been in existence since January 2005. The Centre is a research association composed of faculty members, research associates, and graduate students who share an interest in inclusive education research.

The goal of the Centre is to encourage collaborative investigations of theories and practices in an effort to enhance the educational opportunities of all students with exceptionalities. The Centre is committed to sharing research findings and resources with academics, educators, and families.

We have a website that you can visit at
www.edu.uwo.ca/inclusive_education.

Additionally, we have decided to publish a newsletter twice a year in order to give our local communities an idea of what we have been doing. In this edition, we share a few projects that we are working on, inform you of research award recipients, and begin to introduce our members to you.

We hope that you find this publication useful. If you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Two School Winners of Best Practices Grant

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Coaching to Inclusion, a local yearly conference, organized by members of boards in South Western Ontario celebrated 10 years at its past event. In order to celebrate, a new award to support inclusive practices in the school was established. The intention was to support and provide sustained follow up of the professional development that has been provided in one/two day workshops for the past 10 years.

There were many excellent proposals received and in the end the following schools were provided the funds:

\$3,000 to St. Martin Catholic Elementary School in London for their grant proposal entitled Differentiated Instruction in the Elementary Classroom: Learning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Implementation of Assistive Technology in the Inclusive School Setting.

\$1,000 to John Paul II Catholic Secondary School in London for their grant entitled Broadening the Perspective So Each May Learn.

Congratulations to these 2 schools and thanks to all who sent in proposals. It showed the team that inclusion is alive and well!

Introducing Our Team

A brief snapshot of our core faculty

Dr. Jacqueline Specht:

Has been Director of the Centre since 2004, a tenured associate professor at the Faculty of Education and an adjunct professor with the Psychology Department at UWO. She has a background in both quantitative and qualitative methodology and analyses. She teaches courses in educational psychology and special education at the graduate and undergraduate level, and is also an investigator with the Canadian and Language Literacy Research Network (www.cllrnet.ca). Her research in the pediatric rehabilitation field has included investigations into resilience, social skills, and self-esteem. Her research in the area of literacy has spanned reading and writing strategies and, computer literacy in early childhood. The focus of her research is the pedagogical issues surrounding the participation of children in the school system.

Dr. Alan Edmunds:

Worked as a special education teacher, a school psychologist, a private educational consultant, and as a faculty member at four different Canadian universities for over 20 years. His research interests include: understanding the thinking/learning of highly gifted individuals and individuals with LD, and providing optimum learning environments for all individuals with exceptional learning needs. He teaches educational psychology and special education at the undergraduate level and specialty courses in learning disabilities, giftedness, and cognition/learning at the Master's and PhD levels. His current research includes examining the writing processes of a precocious child writer. Alan is on sabbatical in 2008.

Dr. Elizabeth Nowicki:

began her career as an elementary school teacher. She is now a psychologist and an assistant professor at UWO. Her research interests surround the sub-domains of social, developmental, and school psychology. She enjoys teaching educational psychology and special education courses in the B.Ed. program as well as graduate courses in educational assessment and statistics. Her current research examines: developmental changes in children's perceptions of peers in regards to in-group favouritism and out-group prejudice; social competence of children with learning difficulties; measurement and assessment of attitudes; psycho-educational assessment; and racial/ethnic and gender biases during childhood.

2007 Conference on Inclusive Education

On April 27, the Centre hosted the First Annual Conference on Inclusive Education. Over 100 people attended the day-long event at the UWO Faculty of Education, where team member Alan Edmunds spoke on "***An Effective Approach for Excellent Classroom Management***". Participants gained insight into the underlying reasons why

disruptive student behaviours can occur, and considered an approach to behaviour that is success-oriented rather than punishment-based.

A 2007 participant wrote: "*...having worked in some very high needs, inner city schools, I felt that Dr. Edmunds gave the most comprehensive, practical workshop regarding how to*

engage students, and also understanding why the behaviour is occurring that I have attended in a long time."

For information on the 2008 Conference visit:

www.edu.uwo.ca/inclusive_education

and look under the Events section.

Our Research: Elizabeth Nowicki

My research interests focus on children's peer relationships in elementary school classrooms. I recently completed a three year study which investigated developmental differences in children's perceptions of classmates with learning difficulties, from different racial or ethnic groups, and of the opposite gender.

I am currently investigating different ways to assess children's perceptions of their peers, and how these perceptions are shaped by the beliefs of their classmates.

Another research interest is using meta-analysis to better understand children's peer relationships.



These studies have focused on the social competence of children with learning disabilities, children's attitudes towards peers with or without cognitive or physical difficulties, and how childhood experiences are related to adult involvement with the criminal justice system.

My graduate students are working on research projects which include the impact of the Tribes program on social relationships in elementary school classrooms, young children's beliefs about classmates with autism, and preschoolers' play interactions with typically and non-typically developing classmates.

School Roles Study: Jacqueline Specht

When students are involved in school, they seem to do better. Some students participate a lot, and others do not. Over the past year, we have been in local elementary schools interviewing Grade 7 and 8 students, teachers and parents to find out why some children seem to get involved, while others do not.

Our plan is to follow these students as they move into secondary school to see how and why participation

in school changes. We are doing this because promoting children's active engagement in school through opportunities such as involvement in classroom lessons, games, sports, and social events, leads to a greater likelihood of successful experiences. This may be especially true during the transition to secondary school when the emphasis on social comparison is heightened. The potential worries and vulnerabilities of children with respect to social comparison may interfere with participation.

In the coming year, we will be interviewing the students who are now in Grade 8 and 9, their parents and their teachers so that we may start to look at how this move to secondary school is beginning to impact their participation. We will be reporting these findings in future issues of our newsletter.

For information on this study contact Jacqueline Specht at jspecht@uwo.ca.

Graduate Student Research Awards

Established with gifts from Western Alumni, the Centre for Inclusive Education Research Award is offered to graduate students enrolled in the Faculty of Education who will be completing a thesis on a topic related to the inclusive education of students with special needs.

The award is granted through a competitive process that investigates both the merit of the project and of the student. Up to

three awards of \$750 each are granted annually.

This year, the Award has been given to: **Michelle Baldwin** for her research on "Enablers and barriers of community service for youth with disabilities"; **Katherine Davidson** for "The research to practice gap in the identification and instruction of students at risk for reading disabilities: Teachers' perspectives"; and **Mikael Juras** for "Teachers' perceptions of the Tribes program: Effective components and

social competence of students".

Congratulations all!



2008 Conference: "Taking Care"

Theme: "Taking Care: Classroom-based strategies in meeting the needs of children with mental health disorders and advancing media literacy in promoting personal safety".

Date: Friday April 25, 2008, 9:00 to 4:00
UWO Faculty of Education, London, Ontario

Key sessions:

- **What's mental health got to do with it?**
Alan Leschied, UWO Faculty of Education
- **Mental health programming in an academic Setting**
Panel of teachers from local school boards
- **Impact of media violence on child and adolescent development: A critical role for parent and educator intervention**
Katie Cole, English Dep't Head, Medway H.S.
- **Developing critical media literacy skills**
Panel of teachers from local school boards

Fee: \$75 (\$70 prior to March 30 '08)
\$40 student teachers
Includes conference package, refreshments,
lunch and parking

More information and registration forms available at
www.edu.uwo.ca/inclusive_education

*You learn to talk by talking,
You learn to read by reading,
You learn to write by writing,
You learn to include by including!*
- Gary Bunch, 1999

Join our Mailing List!

We'll keep you up to date on the Centre's activities, research findings, and coming professional development events.

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