



Centre for Inclusive Education Newsletter



Volume 2, Issue 1

Spring, 2009

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.**

I would like to personally congratulate our 3 graduate students on their receipt of the Centre for Inclusive Education Awards. The students have very interesting and well planned research studies. We await their findings and look forward to sharing them with you through future newsletters and our website.

Our next graduate award deadline is April 15, 2009. This award is in honour of Jessica Campbell Coulson award made possible through a generous donation of her father Mr. David Campbell. If you are a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at UWO doing research in an area relevant to the education of students with exceptionalities, check out our website for application details. Our graduate student research is a key part of the research that we do here at the Faculty and in our Centre

specifically. We are happy to be able to provide some monetary support to their research projects.

We have some exciting events forthcoming. Grace Howell and I are presenting for the LDCSB and the TVDSB during the special education PA day on April 24. Gabrielle Young will present the research on secondary school inclusion at the Ministry of Education/Faculties of Education Forum in Toronto in May. This project was headed by Marilyn Dolmage of Integration Action for Inclusion and was funded by the Ministry of Education. Finally, we have planned a date for our annual conference. More information is presented inside.

I wish you all a happy spring
and a safe summer!

Centre for Inclusive Education 2009 Research Award Winners

Established with gifts from Alumni, this 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 the academic record of the student. Up to three awards of \$750 each are granted annually.

We congratulate the three winners for 2009: **Heather Brown**, M. Ed. candidate for her research proposal "Strengths and weaknesses in the writing of individuals with high-functioning autism spectrum disorders (ASD)";

Jennifer Flinn, M.Ed. candidate for "The educational impacts of tuberous sclerosis complex (TSC); and **Michelle Pompeo**, Ph.D. candidate for "Elementary teachers' perceptions of developing 'interventionist' beliefs and practices".

Best wishes for continued success with these exciting research studies!



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Our Team: Meet our newest core member: Dr. Kathryn Noel



Dr. Kathryn Noel is a Research Professor at The University of Western Ontario. Over the last three decades she has been a teacher, a consultant for both a school board as well as for Ministries of Education, a professor, a journal and manuscript editor, and a researcher.

Her interests include how children learn language and how they use language to learn, as well as the analysis of classroom practices that support and enhance children's learning. She has travelled extensively working with educators to create stimulating learning environments and to respond to challenging learning situations.

Research Interests:

- * Analyzing the writing of gifted children;
- * Analyzing the usefulness of writing across the curriculum for first and second-language English speaking children of various abilities;
- * Language Arts programs as translated by classroom teachers in response to children's needs and abilities.

Current Projects

Kathryn is currently examining the talents of an exceptional child writer, age 10, whose precocity has been evident since age 5. Children who are precocious in closed systems like math and music are rare, but being profoundly gifted in creative writing, an open symbol system, is even more rare. This research also examines the environmental influences that affect this child's writing.

Selected Publications:

Noel, K. & Edmunds, A. L. (2007). Constructing a synthetic-analytic framework for precocious writing. *Roeper Review* 29(2), 125-131.

Edmunds, A. L. & Noel, K. A. (2003a). Literary precocity: An exceptional case among exceptional cases. *Roeper Review*, 25(4), 185-194.

Noel, K. (2002). "The Role of the Affective Domain in Students' Social Studies Writing." In Zajda (Ed.), *Society and the Environment: Teaching SOSE*. Sydney, Australia: James Nicholas Publishers.

2009 Conference on Inclusive Education: "Belonging! Developing and maintaining inclusive environments"

The **Centre for Inclusive Education** will host another important conference for educators on **Friday October 16, 2009** in the Faculty of Education building at the University of Western Ontario.

The **keynote speaker is Dr. Sheila Bennett**. Sheila Bennett is a professor in the Teacher Education Department in the Faculty of Education at Brock University. She has been involved in the area of special education since the beginning of her career as a resource teacher in her home province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Co-author of the reports *Special Education in Ontario Schools* as well as *Special Education Transformation*, Sheila has been deeply

involved in international, provincial and local projects that focus on inclusion and the delivery of equitable and respectful services to all students within educational settings. She served as co-chair, with the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, on the Ontario Ministry of Education Working Table on Special Education.

During the day, participants will have a chance to hear Dr. Bennett and others discuss what educators can do to develop and maintain inclusive environments for students with exceptionalities. A choice of workshops will also be available for participants to attend; these will be

conducted by people who have a wealth of experience in a specific area, such as including students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the regular classroom.

Registration includes parking, all print materials, lunch and refreshments. Forms will be available for download from the Centre for Inclusive Education web site in mid-May. School purchasing card numbers, as well as personal cheques, will be accepted for payment. For more information on this conference, please visit:

www.edu.uwo.ca/inclusive_education

Our Research: ADHD Misdiagnoses across Canada

Alan Edmunds and graduate student Shelley Martsch-Litt presented *ADHD: misdiagnoses across Canada* at the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) conference held in London in November 2008. This study describes research that investigated whether Canadian ADHD diagnosticians were specifically identified; whether common diagnostic criteria/guidelines were used; and whether diagnostic processes were empirically grounded.

Canadian teachers in inclusive classrooms are encountering more students with ADHD-like behaviours and making more referrals for formal diagnosis of the condition. Other research suggests that ADHD diagnoses are susceptible to highly inconsistent and arbitrary assessment processes/criteria (Sanford & Ridley, 1995), thus contributing to teachers' lack of effective interventions.

One-hundred and seventy-six official documents from the prominent Canadian organizations vested in ADHD diagnosis were examined. The results revealed that: 1. various professionals provide ADHD diagnoses; 2. that few organizations had clear diagnostic guidelines, and 3. that few organizations outlined theoretical foundations for ADHD aside from references to DSM-IV-TR criteria. This evidence suggests a three-fold potential for compounding inconsistencies in ADHD diagnoses.

Recommendations for standardized criteria and processes to remediate these pervasive inconsistencies are provided. The authors summarize that excellent diagnostic instruments exist (Zentall, 2006) and exemplary interventions for ADHD have been devised (Lane, Falk & Wehby, 2006).

“Functional behavioural assessments have increasingly proven to be effective for students with ADHD. FBAs identify causal relationships between observed problem behaviours and immediate environments (Lane, Falk & Wehby 2006).”

For more information on this study, contact **Alan Edmunds** at aedmunds@uwo.ca.

Research Update: School Role Participation Study

In our Winter 2008 issue, we introduced the **School Role Participation Study**, which is a collaborative research project between several departments at the University of Western Ontario, a number of local elementary schools, and a community agency in London.

Children who participate in activities outside of school tend to do better in life because they have the opportunity to try out different roles. Each year since 2006, the research team has met with 22 students who were in Grade 7 and 8 at that time, interviewing each of them, and their parents and teachers to find out about the roles that are available to students within the schools, and what factors may help or hinder students' participation.

Recently the team held an information night to share some

findings with all participants. After outlining the processes involved in gathering this information, team members reported that they have found three general types of roles that are available to students:

- * **“doing”** roles, which involve taking part in activities;
- * **“social”** roles which surround connections with others; and
- * **“learning”** roles which help students to understand themselves and the world around them.

At some elementary schools competitive sports take priority, but if a student is not an athlete, he or she may not have as many opportunities to participate. Given that participation is key to creating belonging, we need to find ways to help students, parents and teachers view participation in school as important, especially as it relates to

curricular activities. Chances to show their talents in non-sporting events are important, e.g. music class, class skits and volunteering for jobs around the school.



Currently we are interviewing a large number of our participants who have entered Grade 9. We are very excited to see how their participation may have changed as they transitioned to secondary school.

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

Upcoming Events:

AT4ALL: Assistive Technology for All On the Road to SUCCESS!

AUGUST 27-29, 2009
Ministry of Education
Provincial Schools Branch
255 Ontario Street South
Milton, ON L9T 2M5

The conference will promote enhanced understanding of assistive technology (AT) in meeting the needs of all learners.

Visit www.AT4ALL.ca

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UWO Centre for Inclusive Education
Conference:

**“Belonging! Developing and maintaining
inclusive environments”**

Friday October 16, 2009
UWO Faculty of Education
1137 Western Road, London, Ontario

Guest speakers include **Dr. Sheila Bennett**, professor at the Faculty of Education, Brock University.

Lunch and parking are provided.
For more information visit the Centre’s website at
www.edu.uwo.ca/inclusive_education.

Registration forms will be available on the web site in mid- May.

Join our Mailing List!

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

Contact us at:

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Website:

www.edu.uwo.ca/inclusive_education