



The Meadows Center  
FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK



“We are deeply grateful to the Meadows Foundation for its support of educationally at-risk students in Texas and its dedication to improving education in our state.”

Dean Manuel J. Justiz,  
College of Education,  
The University of Texas at Austin

{ ANNUAL REPORT 2008–2009 }



## { MISSION }

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (MCPER) is dedicated to generating and disseminating empirically validated knowledge and practices to influence educators, researchers, policymakers, families, and other stakeholders who are striving to reduce academic, behavioral, and social risk in all learners, particularly those with disabilities.





## { HISTORY }

The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (MCPER) was launched in the fall of 2008 with a major funding commitment from the Meadows Foundation of Dallas. MCPER is dedicated to providing educators with the knowledge and tools to diagnose, intervene, and alter the trajectory of students who are at risk for educational failure. To inform this effort, MCPER undertakes rigorous new research aimed at understanding the factors affecting at-risk students. Additionally, MCPER translates evidence-based findings into real-world practice and supports needed policy changes to create educational settings that foster success.

MCPER has assembled a unique, interdisciplinary group of colleagues from the fields of psychology, special education, sociology, and speech and language—both within and outside of The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin). Key focus areas for MCPER are academic instructional practices, social environments, knowledge attainment, college and life preparation, and engagement of underrepresented youth.

Within its first year, MCPER surpassed its most ambitious goals of securing external research and evaluation funds from entities such as the Institute of Education Sciences at the U.S. Department of Education, Greater Texas Foundation, Texas Education Agency, Higher Educational Coordinating Board, Texas Youth Commission, and many others. MCPER's interdisciplinary approach is not possible without its research partners, such as Texas A&M University, the University of Houston, Southern Methodist University, the University of Colorado, and numerous others. Simply put, MCPER is an ideal environment for educational risk prevention collaboration at UT Austin and beyond.

## { GOALS }

The overarching goal of MCPER is to identify and alter the course of students who are at risk of academic failure through the utilization of research and professional development for school leaders. MCPER has partnered with the University of Houston, the University of Texas System Institute for Public School Initiatives, and others to conduct research, translate research findings into practices for educators, promote policy changes, and prepare students for academic success.

“Because students are successful when they are engaged in effective instruction, the Center will work to involve all students—those who may have low literacy, special needs, or are capable but not performing—so they can improve their academic achievement and social outcomes,” said Dr. Sharon Vaughn, director of MCPER and professor of special education in the College of Education.

Dr. Vaughn has developed a number of programs for educationally at-risk children and has received several prior grants from the Meadows Foundation. Holder of the H.E. Hartfelder/Southland Corp. Regents Chair in the College of Education, she is the founding director of the Center on School-Based Research at the University of Miami and the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts at UT Austin.

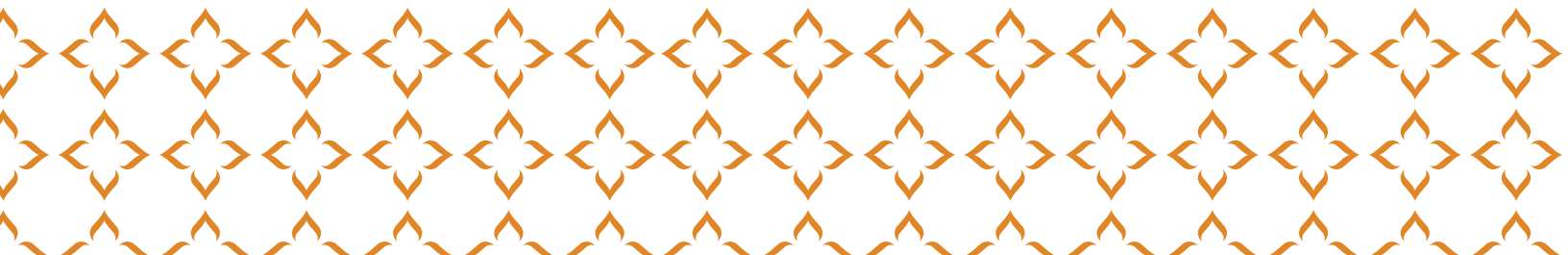
## { SUCCESS STORY }

### Working With Children With Autism: Annie’s Story

Annie is a young child with autism who exhibits challenging behavior throughout her daily activities. Along with her mother, Jane, Annie participated in a MCPER research study in which Jane was taught to assess the function of the challenging behavior and intervene during specified problematic routines. After their participation in the study, Jane commented, “We had a really good weekend. We took her all over. We can take her to restaurants now. Things have gotten easier. She is better at waiting after working with The Meadows Center.”

Jane said that the study and training spurred positive change in Annie. “It was good to sit down and actually look at what’s going on, what her problem behaviors are, because we were stressed about a couple things, and to sit down and come up with a real plan was really good for me. Now when she is having a problem behavior, I think ‘Why?’ and typically come up with a solution that works.”

Jane’s family outings have changed for the better as well. “I feel like I can take her out in public without a fuss. When we went to the grocery store, I used to keep her in the cart because I was afraid of what she might do. Now ... I can take her and my other child, and we can get through the store and I’m not as stressed out. It used to be stressful just even thinking about going to the grocery store. Now, it has gotten a lot better,” she said. “We used to go out and do everything anyway, but the level of stress has gone way down.”



## { SUCCESS STORY }

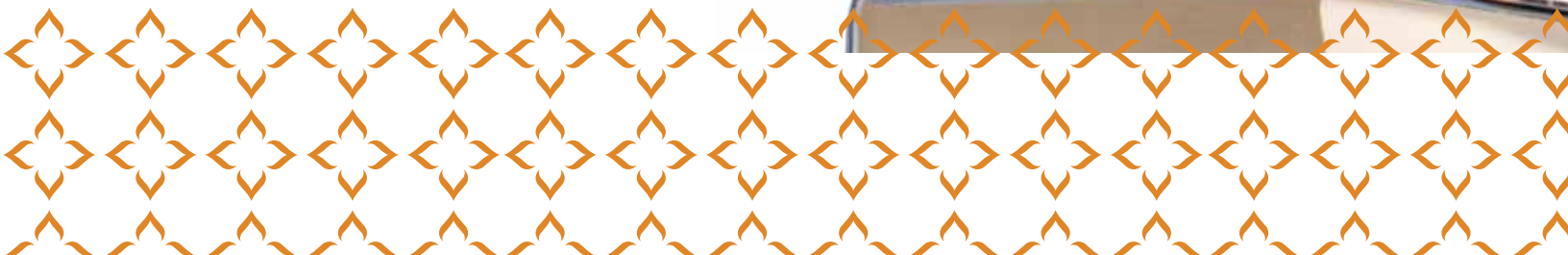
A Focus on Behavior

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Staff members from MCPER's Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute work cooperatively with the Austin Travis County Integral Care Center, coordinating intervention and support work for Spanish-speaking families who have children with autism spectrum disorders. One such staff member's story is below.

"I currently work as the only bilingual behavior specialist at Austin Travis County Integral Care Center (ATCIC, formerly MHMR). There is quite a large caseload there. Families I have worked with were impressed that they had the opportunity to have someone knowledgeable attend school meetings with them, as these are typically difficult and confusing for families. In the past, I have talked with families who told me they often feel that they are not able to explain their situations and they feel the schools don't understand them. Families are not able to adequately advocate for the services their child needs, which is where we come in.

"We have had two other cases where a child was about to be removed from the classroom setting and transferred to a more restrictive setting. I came in as a behavioral specialist to work with the school and the family. We were able to collaborate as a group and create behavior plans that were successful in reducing the behavior of concern, so that the child would not be removed from the classroom. Additionally, it was helpful for the parent and the school to have an additional member on the team who could bridge the gap on any potential communication breakdowns. MCPER was also able to recommend additional services for the child. In the end, the parents felt the relationship with the school was better since they were able to better communicate their frustrations and needs."



## { EVENTS }

One of the primary aims of MCPER is not only to research and develop new practices that reduce educational risk, but also to share effective practices and research findings with the wider community. To that end, MCPER organizes several lectures and brown bag discussions throughout the year to share our recent research and new knowledge with the educational community.

MCPER plays host to three types of events throughout the academic year:

- The Mollie Villeret Davis Distinguished Lecture is an annual event targeting researchers and practitioners. The lectures and discussions focus on addressing educational risk through current, practical issues in education that can be applied in classrooms and questions, methods, and analyses applicable to research efforts.

- The Distinguished Lecture Series brings expert researchers in the field of education to UT Austin to discuss advances and new findings in their research agendas in relation to educational risk. This diverse group of faculty members enhances our understanding of identifying and addressing educational risk and exposes MCPER staff members and other researchers at UT Austin to the latest advances in the field.
- The Brown Bag Series features professional development presentations for MCPER staff members and colleagues that focus on ongoing research at the Center.

Our calendar of events can be found on our Web site ([www.meadowscenter.org/dls.asp](http://www.meadowscenter.org/dls.asp)). It includes descriptions of upcoming events and their intended audiences. In addition, information about past events is posted online, along with handouts and presentation slides where appropriate.

## { IN THEIR OWN WORDS }

Although it is important to point out the experimental design of our work, it is perhaps more powerful to hear directly from the students on the impact MCPER has had on their lives.

*"I had trouble reading in my elementary school, and when I [was] over here (MCPER intervention group in middle school), I was doing a lot better."*

*"It helped me a lot because I remember when I was little, I would always get big books that I can't read. Now, I found those books and can read them."*

*"In other classes, the teacher doesn't explain a lot, and this (MCPER) teacher goes back when we need help."*

*"Ms. S takes the time out and tells us what to do and what not to do or just anything we have problems with. She comes by one by one to help us."*

*"It (reading) will help me get my job in the future, and it helps you through life and gets you where you need to go."*



Dr. Diane Pedrotty Bryant, left, Dr. Greg Roberts, Dr. Dan Robinson, Dr. Sharon Vaughn, Dr. Sharon Jackson, Dr. Kevin Stark, Dr. Mark O'Reilly. Not pictured: Dr. Pamela Bell, Dr. Herbert Rieth. Photos on pages 7–9 courtesy of Spencer Selvidge ([www.spencerselvidge.com](http://www.spencerselvidge.com)).

## { BOARD OF DIRECTORS }

The Board of Directors provides the strategic direction of MCPER as well as the intellectual dynamism for much of the Center's research and work. Detailed bios of each board member and institute director can be found on our Web site ([www.meadowscenter.org/people](http://www.meadowscenter.org/people)).



### **Sharon Vaughn, Ph.D.**

*Executive Director, The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk*

*Director, MCPER Dropout Prevention Institute*

*H.E. Hartfelder/Southland Corp. Regents Chair and Professor, Department of Special Education:  
Learning Disabilities/Behavior Disorders Program*

#### **MCPER Contributions**

As the executive director of MCPER, Dr. Vaughn provides the overall vision and strategic direction of the Center. She specializes in intervention research for students with learning problems and disabilities.



### **Pamela Bell, Ph.D.**

*Director, The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk*

#### **MCPER Contributions**

Dr. Bell's academic background is in communication disorders, specifically the education of students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Her areas of expertise include translating research findings into professional development to improve classroom instructional practices and providing technical assistance for school improvement through response to intervention. One of her areas of special interest is the use of technology to enhance the knowledge and skills of school leaders and educators.



### **Diane Pedrotty Bryant, Ph.D.**

*Director, MCPER Mathematics Institute for Learning Disabilities and Difficulties*

*Fellow, Cissy McDaniel Parker Fellow Fund*

*Professor, Department of Special Education: Learning Disabilities/Behavior Disorders Program*

#### **MCPER Contributions**

Dr. Bryant focuses on the development of early mathematics measures and intervention research in mathematics for students with learning disabilities and difficulties. She is a professor of learning disabilities in the Department of Special Education at UT Austin and a fellow in the Cissy McDaniel Parker fellowship. She received her doctorate from the University of New Mexico in 1986. Dr. Bryant has taught students with learning disabilities and has served as an administrator in Albuquerque, New Mexico, public schools. Currently, she serves as the principal investigator for the Validation of Early Mathematics Interventions Project, which is funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, and the 3-Tier Mathematics Project, which is funded by the Texas Education Agency.



### **Sharon Jackson, Ph.D.**

*Director, The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk*

#### **MCPER Contributions**

Dr. Jackson focuses on funding opportunities for research on academic risk and its prevention. Her experience involves working in classrooms; at the district level; with the Texas Education Agency; with the Texas State Legislature; with professional organizations; with other state entities, including the Governor's Office; and with education service centers.



### **Mark O'Reilly, Ph.D., BCBA**

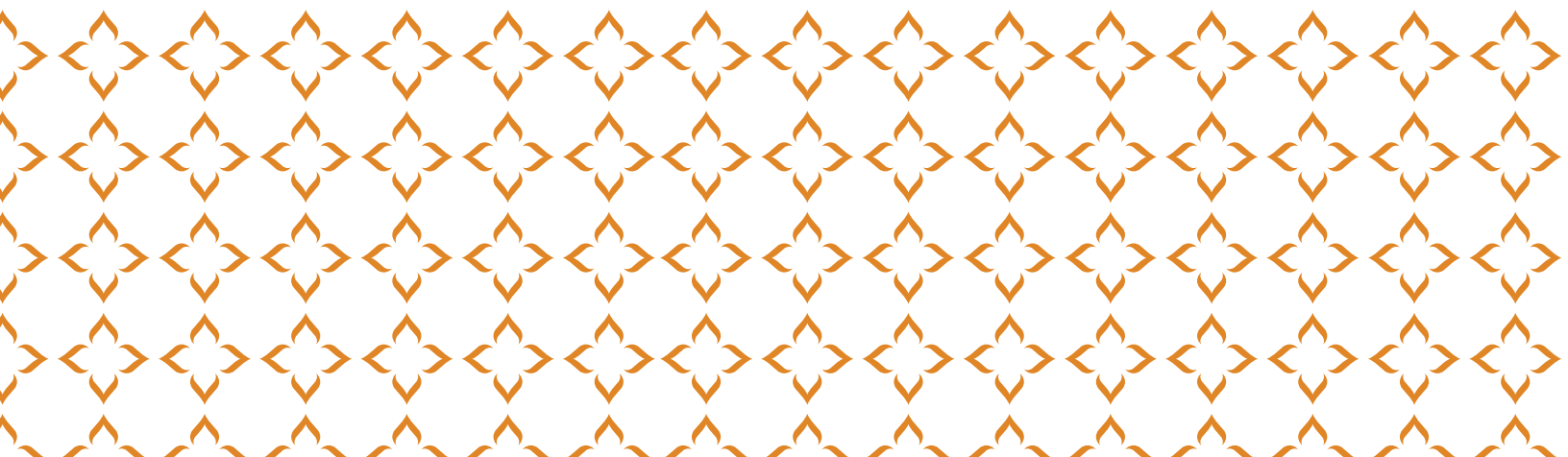
*Director, MCPER Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute*

*Mollie Villeret Davis Professor in Learning Disabilities*

*Professor, Department of Special Education: Autism and Developmental Disabilities Program*

#### **MCPER Contributions**

A native of Ireland, Dr. O'Reilly joined the Department of Special Education in 2002. He currently coordinates the graduate training programs in autism and developmental disability. Dr. O'Reilly's program coursework is preapproved by the Behavior Analysis Certification Board. He is interested in the design, implementation, and evaluation of evidence-based and culturally sensitive services for students with autism and related developmental and physical disabilities as well as their families.





### **Herbert Rieth, Ed.D.**

*Professor and Chairman, Department of Special Education: Learning Disabilities/Behavior Disorders Program*

#### **MCPER Contributions**

Dr. Rieth is co-chairman of MCPER's annual Meadows Postdoctoral Fellowship. He is also the Audrey Rogers Myers Centennial Professor in Education of the Learning Disabilities/Behavior Disorders Program and chairman of the Special Education Department in the College of Education.



### **Greg Roberts, Ph.D.**

*Associate Director, The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk*

*Director, Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts*

#### **MCPER Contributions**

Dr. Roberts is trained as an educational psychologist with expertise in quantitative methods including program evaluation. His work focuses on achievement trends in at-risk groups.



### **Daniel Robinson, Ph.D.**

*Director, MCPER Dropout Prevention Institute*

*Professor, Department of Educational Psychology: Area I—Learning, Cognition, and Instruction Program*

#### **MCPER Contributions**

Like the rest of the Area I faculty, Dr. Robinson is involved with several research teams. His main research interests are evaluating the use of technology to enhance learning (graphic organizers, simulations, etc.) and, particularly, team-based learning. He is the editor of *Educational Psychology Review* and a member of the editorial boards of

*Educational Technology Research and Development, Journal of Experimental Education, Research in the Schools, and Contemporary Educational Psychology.*

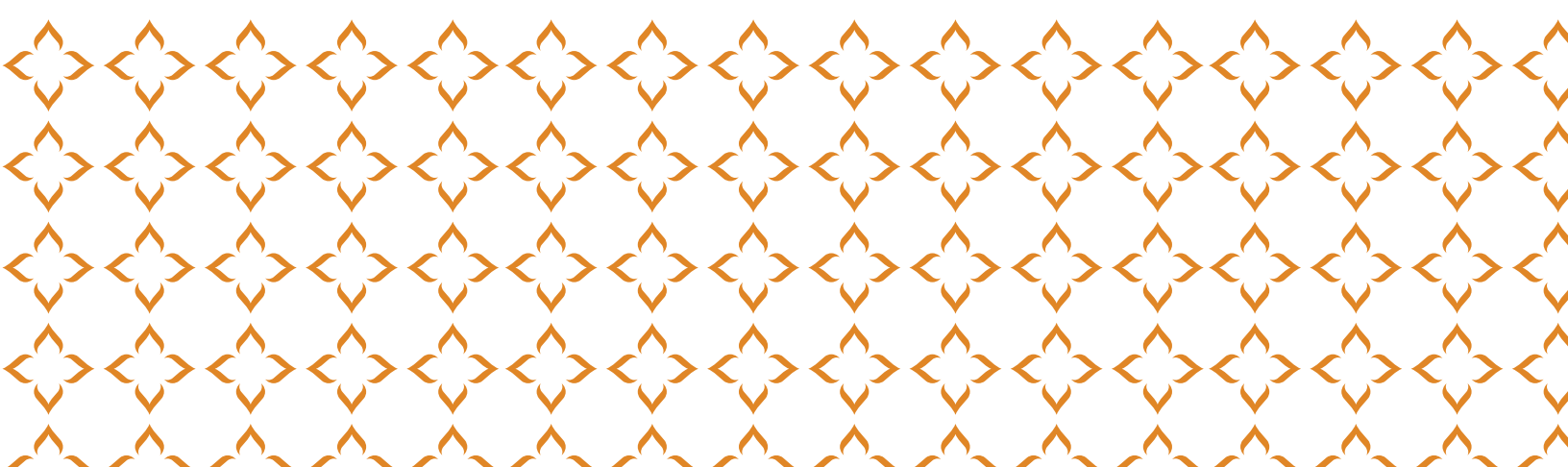


### **Kevin Stark, Ph.D.**

*Professor, Department of Educational Psychology: School Psychology Program*

#### **MCPER Contributions**

Dr. Stark's research interests and expertise focus on the application of cognitive-behavioral interventions to behavior problems in the schools as well as the assessment, treatment, and theoretical models of depression in children and adolescents. Additionally, Dr. Stark is studying the impact of participation in youth athletics on children's mental health.





## { INSTITUTES }

Three institutes within MCPER focus on specific areas of educational risk: the Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute, the Mathematics Institute for Learning Disabilities and Difficulties, and the Dropout Prevention Institute. All three areas of focus are becoming more prominent issues in our society at large. The institutes are designed to address the special needs within each respective area of educational risk.

## { AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS INSTITUTE }

### Overview

The Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute, directed by Dr. Mark O'Reilly, is charged with addressing the growing problem of autism spectrum disorders (ASDs). ASDs are a group of disabilities that significantly affect social, communication, and language development. Many individuals with ASDs also have intellectual disabilities and display behavior patterns that can be challenging for teachers and parents (e.g., stereotyped and ritualistic behaviors). In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of children diagnosed with this condition.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the prevalence of ASDs has increased from 4 to 5 per 10,000 a decade ago to 1 per 100 live births today. ASDs include autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, Rett's disorder, and pervasive developmental disability not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS). ASDs are typically lifelong conditions, and these individuals require educational and other supports to fully participate in inclusive settings such as the regular classroom, workplace, and community.

### Research Findings/Ongoing Work

Students who are diagnosed with ASDs are clearly at risk of failure and exclusion within educational contexts. MCPER develops and shares best practices to educate and support students with ASDs, which is of vital importance and is a major aim of MCPER.

## { MATHEMATICS INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES AND DIFFICULTIES }

### Overview

The Mathematics Institute for Learning Disabilities and Difficulties, directed by Dr. Diane Pedrotty Bryant, is committed to the understanding of mathematics learning disabilities and difficulties and to the validation of evidence-based assessments

and interventions to prevent and remediate learning problems. The institute focuses specifically on the neuropsychological aspects of mathematics learning disabilities, assessment and intervention at the elementary level, and effective programming at the secondary level.

### Research Findings/Ongoing Work

MCPER recognizes that early identification and intervention is needed for students who are at risk for mathematics difficulties, and the U.S. Department of Education has recommended response to intervention (RTI) as a promising technique for preventing early learning problems. To help satisfy this need, MCPER engages in research on early mathematics acquisition and disabilities. The emphases of this research include developing and ensuring the technical adequacy (reliability and validity) of assessment measures for early identification of struggling students and for monitoring progress in early mathematics instruction; developing and validating intervention booster lessons for at-risk students in kindergarten through second grade; and validating an RTI, multitiered (Tiers II and III) model. This model includes intervention lessons with progress-monitoring tools to teach students in first and second grades who have been identified as being at risk (Tier II) or as having severe mathematics difficulties (Tier III).

Mathematics is emerging as a new content area of focus in educational research at the federal level, in part due to the recent release of recommendations by several national councils and panels, such as the National Mathematics Advisory Panel and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. MCPER is committed to identifying and synthesizing research findings that illuminate our understanding of both the importance of mathematics performance in students' future success and the factors that improve the efficacy of mathematics programming (curricula and instructional techniques), especially at the secondary level.

## { DROPOUT PREVENTION INSTITUTE }

### Overview

Dr. Jade Wexler, along with Dr. Sharon Vaughn and Dr. Dan Robinson, direct the Dropout Prevention Institute, which is dedicated to increasing the understanding of the potential causes and interventions that may prevent school dropout and increase school engagement. The institute focuses its research and efforts on early intervention (preK–5), secondary intervention (6–12), and postsecondary intervention (college and graduate).

Dropping out of school has significant individual, societal, and economic consequences that greatly affect an individual's ability to remain competitive in a world with increasing demands for high levels of literacy and academic knowledge. Students who drop out of high school and who cannot read and write proficiently may not be able to participate fully in society in the future, contributing to problems such as increased crime and decreased economic productivity (August & Shanahan, 2006). For example, dropouts from the class of 2006 will cost the nation more than \$309 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity over their lifetimes (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007). In response to these problems, MCPER is engaging in research and product development that will result in materials and policy to guide leaders in their efforts to curb the current trends.

### Research Findings/Ongoing Work

MCPER and the Greater Texas Foundation completed two briefs that synthesize and “translate” two Institute of Education Sciences practice guides on dropout prevention: one for administrators and policymakers and one for teachers. For more information about the Dropout Prevention Institute's research projects, visit its research page ([www.meadowscenter.org/institutes/dropout/research.asp](http://www.meadowscenter.org/institutes/dropout/research.asp)).



## { RESEARCH PROJECTS }

MCPER comprises a unique group of colleagues from psychology, special education, sociology, and speech and language. The Center is designed to be a bridge between research and practice in helping create educational settings that promote success. MCPER focuses on key educational risk areas, which include academic instructional practices as well as social environments, knowledge attainment, college and life preparation, and engagement of underrepresented youth.

### **Project Areas, 2008–2009**

#### **Adolescent Learners**

- Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR)
- Older Students With Reading Difficulties
- Preventing School Dropout With Secondary Students
- Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA)
- Texas Center for Learning Disabilities (TCLD)
- Texas Youth Commission Project (TYC)

#### **English Language Learners**

- Academic Vocabulary for Fifth- to Seventh-Grade English Language Learners in Texas
- Center for Research and Educational Achievement and Teaching of English Language Learners (CREATE)
- Optimizing Educational Outcomes of Spanish Speakers Who Are English Language Learners

#### **Mathematics**

- 3-Tier Mathematics Model
- The Validation of Early Mathematics Interventions

#### **Professional Development**

- College and Career Readiness Initiative: English/Language Arts Faculty Collaborative (CCRI)
- Enhancing the Quality of Expository Text Instruction and Comprehension Through Content- and Case-Situated Professional Development (Teacher Quality)

#### **Reading**

- Evaluation of Reading Comprehension Interventions
- Preventing Reading Difficulties: A Three-Tiered Intervention Model (3-Tier Research)

#### **Technical Assistance**

- Building Capacity for Response to Intervention (RtI) in Texas Schools
- Center on Instruction—Special Education Strand



## { OUR WORK IN ACTION }

MCPER conducts many projects across the spectrum of educational risk prevention. However, we cannot describe all of those projects here. Instead, as an example of our work and how it affects students' lives, we will examine one aspect of the Texas Center for Learning Disabilities (TCLD) project. For more information on all of our projects, visit our Web site ([www.meadowscenter.org/projects](http://www.meadowscenter.org/projects)).

### **Texas Center for Learning Disabilities**

MCPER led multitiered instruction including intensive intervention with students in Austin-area and Houston middle schools who did not respond to enhanced reading instruction (moderate intervention). One group of students was followed for three years, for research purposes (2006–2009).

### **Participants**

MCPER followed one group of at-risk students with reading difficulties from sixth to eighth grade. These students were enrolled in middle schools in Round Rock, Manor, and Houston, Texas.

**Year 1:** Beginning in the fall of 2006, at-risk sixth-grade students were identified by examining the previous year's scores from the state-mandated assessment. These students took part in either (a) intervention (in groups of approximately 10–15 students) provided by research staff or (b) typical instruction provided by the school. In addition, content area teachers with students in their classrooms who were identified as being at risk received professional development training.

**Year 2:** Students who did not make adequate progress after one year of intervention received more intensive intervention—either (a) a standard instructional intervention or (b) an individualized intervention—in seventh grade. To increase opportunities to respond, students received intervention in groups of 5 or less.

**Year 3:** The first cohort of students was followed through the end of eighth grade. Students who made minimal progress in Years 1 and 2 participated in another year of individualized intervention in even smaller groups than in Year 2 (approximately 3–5 students).

### **Findings/Publications**

Research is ongoing and will be posted on the TCLD Web site ([www.texasldcenter.org](http://www.texasldcenter.org)) as it becomes available.

### **Investigators**

Dr. Sharon Vaughn, The University of Texas at Austin

Dr. Jack M. Fletcher, University of Houston

Dr. Carolyn Denton, Children's Learning Institute, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

Dr. Jade Wexler, The University of Texas at Austin

Dr. David Francis, The University of Houston

## { AWARDS AND ACCOLADES }

**In its relatively short lifespan, MCPER and its researchers and practitioners have received a number of accolades for their pioneering work. In particular, MCPER is proud to be a part of the UT Austin College of Education, which *U.S. News and World Report* ranked seventh overall in the United States. The following is only a partial list of our awards and accolades. Announcements are regularly posted on our Web site ([www.meadowscenter.org](http://www.meadowscenter.org)).**

### **Kevin Stark's Depression-Treatment Program Adopted in Belgium and the Netherlands**

Dr. Kevin Stark's treatment program for depressed children was adopted by the health ministries of Belgium and the Netherlands as the only state-approved treatment for children in their countries. It is likely that other Western European countries will follow Belgium and the Netherlands' lead.

### **MCPER Executive Director Sharon Vaughn Named 2009–2010 Special Education Dean's Fellow**

Dr. Sharon Vaughn, executive director of MCPER, was selected as the Special Education Department Dean's Fellow for the 2009–2010 academic year. She will serve as the Fellow during the spring 2010 semester.

### **U.S. News and World Report Ranks UT Austin College of Education as Third in Nation**

The *U.S. News and World Report* 2009 College of Education National Rankings listed UT Austin's College of Education as third in the nation among public colleges and schools of education and seventh in the nation overall, tied with Johns Hopkins, Northwestern University, University of California-Berkeley, and University of Wisconsin-Madison. MCPER and its partner centers, the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts and the Texas Child Study Center, were acknowledged in a press

release from the College of Education as "nationally and internationally acclaimed programs and research that fuel the college's continuing success."

### **Kathleen Hughes Named 2009 Community Partner of the Year for Murchison Elementary School**

Kathleen Hughes, co-coordinator for the mathematics intervention project, was named the 2009 Community Partner of the Year for Murchison Elementary School. Hughes' selection for the award signified that she had been integral to Murchison Elementary achieving its campus goals and that she had a significant impact on student achievement throughout the school year. She was honored and thanked for her contributions at the 2009 Volunteer and Partner Appreciation Reception at the Pflugerville High School Fine Arts Center.

### **Jennifer Heckert Receives 2008 Texas Council for Exceptional Children Research Incentive Award**

Jennifer Heckert was the recipient of the Texas Council for Exceptional Children (TCEC) 2008 Research Incentive Award. She received a financial award from TCEC to help with her dissertation research and presented on her dissertation topic at the TCEC 2009 State Conference. Heckert also was featured in the October/fall 2008 issue of the TCEC newsletter.

### **Deborah Reed Wins Spot on Inaugural Cohort of Doctoral Student Scholars in Special Education Research**

Deborah Reed, a project manager at The Meadows Center and a doctoral student at The University of Texas at Austin, was selected through a national competition to participate in the inaugural cohort of the Doctoral Student Scholars in Special Education Research. In the Council for Exceptional Children Division for Research (CEC-DR) initiative, Reed and nine other doctoral scholars participated in a series of online seminars that were designed to showcase their exemplary work and foster communication among special education researchers.

## { THE MEADOWS FOUNDATION }

### **Background**

Algur H. and Virginia Meadows established the Meadows Foundation in 1948. The foundation has contributed more than \$6 million to UT Austin for programs in the College of Education, the LBJ School of Public Affairs, the Blanton Museum of Art, the Harry Ransom Center, and the School of Architecture.

### **Mission**

The Meadows Foundation exists to assist people and institutions of Texas to improve the quality and circumstances of life for themselves and future generations.

### **Vision**

The Meadows Foundation strives to exemplify the principles of its founder in addressing basic human needs by working toward eliminating ignorance,

hopelessness, and suffering; protecting the environment; providing cultural enrichment; encouraging excellence; and promoting understanding and cooperation among people.

### **Meadows Foundation and MCPER**

UT Austin received a \$1.5 million grant from the Meadows Foundation to establish MCPER in the College of Education. The five-year grant is helping fund the start-up and operations of the Center. In short, MCPER would not be here without the generous gift from the Meadows Foundation.

“We are deeply grateful to the Meadows Foundation for its support of educationally at-risk students in Texas,” said Dr. Manuel J. Justiz, dean of the UT Austin College of Education. “The foundation has been a generous supporter of the college for many years and is dedicated to improving education in Texas.”



## { A WORD FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SHARON VAUGHN }

Wherever I go in Austin and beyond, I notice the contributions of the Meadows Foundation. The list is long, including the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, Long Center for the Performing Arts, and Blanton Museum of Art. These are all lasting contributions of value in Austin, all made by the Meadows Foundation. Now, in my mind, there is another important institution that can be added to that list, The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (MCPER). The creation of MCPER in 2008 fulfills a lifelong dream not only for me, but also for many of my colleagues. I think there is no greater privilege in academe than being asked to dream about what you would most like to do and then getting to do that.

We have research partners that include but are not limited to Texas A&M University; the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics (TIMES) at the University of Houston; Southern Methodist University; the University of Colorado; as well as school districts throughout Texas but in particular Del Valle, Manor, Round Rock, and Austin. Other organizations and individuals who support the Center include the Hammill Institute and Foundation, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and Vaughn and Tex Gross (through the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts). In fact, the Vaughn Gross Center is now an integral part of MCPER.

While I am thankful for everyone's support, there is still much work to be done. I would like to cite an anecdote from Atul Gawande, a surgeon, writer, and professor at Harvard Medical School, to highlight the importance of prevention in reducing educational risk. "Each year, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, two million Americans acquire an infection while they are in the hospital. Ninety thousand die of that infection. The hardest part of the infection-control team's job ... is not coping with the variety of contagions they encounter or the panic that sometimes occurs among patients and staff. Instead, their greatest difficulty is getting clinicians like me to do the one thing that consistently halts the spread of infections: wash our hands." In medicine, as with educational risk, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We at the Center, as well as the Meadows Foundation, started with that thought at the forefront of our minds when we created MCPER.

In closing, I want to invite you all to participate in our activities as knowledge-seeking partners as we strive to generate understanding of high-impact, empirically supported practices to inform educators, policymakers, families, and other stakeholders who are working to reduce academic, behavioral, and social risk in all learners, particularly those with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sharon Vaughn

“I think there is no greater  
privilege in academe than being  
asked to dream about what you  
would most like to do and then  
getting to do that.”



## { FINAL WORDS }

There is still much work to be done to reduce educational risk in the United States and worldwide.

MCPER is committed to leading this effort and providing educational best practices that can be shared around the world. As the chart below illustrates, serious economic consequences are associated with one's level of educational attainment. We at MCPER are dedicated to removing the roadblocks to educational success for all students, primarily those who are most at risk of falling through the educational cracks.

The following chart shows the median annual income of year-round, full-time workers 25 and older, by highest level of educational attainment and sex.

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2006)

### Average Income by Level of Educational Attainment

Level of Educational Attainment	Male Average Income	Female Average Income
Less Than Ninth Grade	\$22,320 annually	\$16,142 annually
High School Dropout	27,189	20,125
High School Completion	36,302	26,289
Associate's Degree	47,180	33,939
Bachelor's Degree	60,020	42,172
Master's Degree	75,025	51,412
Doctor's Degree	85,864	66,852





“Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.”

Chinese Proverb

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