



The Meadows Center

FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK



2009–2010 REPORT

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.



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The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk

In the fall of 2008, the Meadows Foundation launched The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (MCPER) with a 5-year, \$1.5 million grant. Part of the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin (UT Austin), MCPER assembled a unique, interdisciplinary, intercollegiate group of experts from the fields of psychology, special education, sociology, and speech and language. Their mission: to provide educators with the knowledge and tools to diagnose, intervene, and alter the trajectory of students who are at risk for educational failure.

Focusing its activities in the areas of academic instructional practices, social environments, knowledge attainment, college and life preparation, and engagement of underrepresented youth, MCPER undertakes rigorous new research to understand 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.

Thanks to its outstanding directors and research partners, MCPER surpassed its most ambitious initial goals and has continued this trend of excellence through its second year.

The Meadows Foundation

Algur H. and Virginia Meadows established the Meadows Foundation to help the people and institutions of Texas improve the quality and circumstances of their lives and those of future generations. The Meadows Foundation strives to exemplify its founder's principles of 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.

Since it was founded in 1948, the Meadows Foundation has contributed more than \$6 million to UT Austin for programs in the College of Education, LBJ School of Public Affairs, Blanton Museum of Art, Harry Ransom Center, and School of Architecture.





ABOUT US

A WORD FROM EXECUTIVE



DIRECTOR SHARON VAUGHN

As we come to the end of our second year as The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk (MCPER), we are both proud and thankful. We are overwhelmed with appreciation for how much we have grown and what we have achieved in the past 12 months. Our productivity, both in terms of projects and in terms of funding, has increased seemingly exponentially, even in a time when hard financial decisions are being made in Texas and across the country. I am grateful for the recognition of and belief in the importance of our work, especially by College of Education Dean Manuel Justiz, by the broader community at The University of Texas at Austin, and beyond. The UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child identifies “developing to the fullest” as a basic human right, and we believe that preventing educational risk is one key way to ensure that all children and adolescents exercise this right.

We continue to be humbled by the unwavering generosity of those upon whose support we depend and by the responsibility that is entrusted to us by our funders and grantors. We hope this year’s accomplishments demonstrate our ability, commitment, and determination to accomplish this important work.

None of this work would have been possible without the generous support of the Meadows Foundation of Dallas. As the funder that created MCPER, the Meadows Foundation has helped us clarify and document our mission and goals, and it has supported us as we strive to attain and surpass those goals. The Meadows Foundation’s continued investment in Texas education and in MCPER has created an environment in which rigorous research and the application of evidence-based practices thrive.

We have an extraordinary team at MCPER that has contributed to this tremendous growth. The associate

director of MCPER, Dr. Greg Roberts, has demonstrated leadership and talent for directing teams to accomplish successful projects across numerous areas, including evaluation, research and statistics, and technical assistance. Several early career scholars have exemplified their commitment to our mission by pursuing new grant opportunities, taking the lead on existing projects, and expanding our work in the sphere of translational research. Researchers taking on the role of principal investigator, co-principal investigator, or project director for new projects this year include Ms. Theresa Clarke, Dr. Letty Martinez, Dr. Saro Mohammed, Dr. Gareth Morgan, Dr. Colleen Reutebuch, Dr. Elizabeth Swanson, and Dr. Jade Wexler. In addition to contributing to successful grant proposals and managing new projects, these researchers shape the direction and mission of MCPER by serving as directors of our institutes and planning lectures and scholarly events that are meaningful and relevant to UT Austin and the wider community.

Of course, none of us could get by without the teams of people who work, often behind the scenes, to ensure that our projects run smoothly and our products are of the highest quality. Our Administrative and Production teams are world-class, and they allow us to focus on what we do best, the research, with confidence that the end results will make contributions to educational leaders and practitioners.

Thank you to all of our staff members, researchers, and partners for an extraordinarily successful year.

CORE OBJECTIVES

MCPER had three core objectives for the 2009–2010 academic year:

1. Foster participation from researchers in the field of educational risk
2. Make a direct, positive impact on students and their communities
3. Secure and increase funding for research and implementation of programs



GOALS AND

GOAL 1: To engage a minimum of five full-time researchers across multiple disciplines in risk-related research

More than 20 full-time researchers have participated in MCPER's Distinguished Lecture Series and have researched and implemented MCPER's programs.

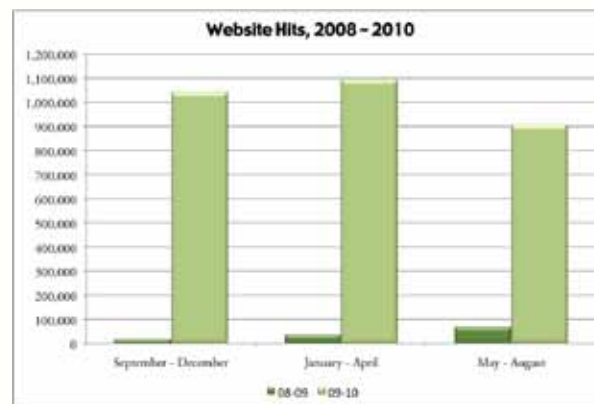
These researchers have delivered 53 presentations, and published three books, 14 book chapters, and 67 articles—plus 79 publications in press and 36 in review. Some of these publications have been recognized nationally, and these researchers and others at MCPER have received 20 different awards and recognitions in the last year.

RESULTS

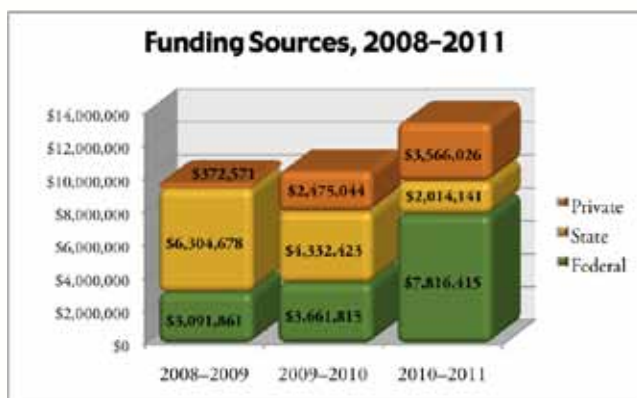
GOAL 2:

To directly, positively affect more than 20 school districts, 200 teachers, and 20,000 students through professional development, research, and consulting

MCPER programs have been implemented in 24 school districts in the Texas alone. Including out-of-state districts, MCPER has directly affected 1,200 school districts (**60 times the goal**), more than 15,000 teachers (**75 times the goal**), and 250,000 students (**12.5 times the goal**) nationwide.



The MCPER website, www.meadowscenter.org, received almost 4.1 million hits in the 2009–2010 academic year, more than 26 times the number of hits received the year it went live (2008–2009).



GOAL 3:

To procure state and federal grants to sustain and increase MCPER research

GOAL 4:

To increase MCPER's externally funded budget (in contrast to the core operating budget) from \$650,000 to \$4 million within 12 months and then to \$12 million by 2013

The MCPER staff worked tirelessly toward these goals, receiving **23 grants** totaling almost **\$12.75 million** in funding. In total, the 2009–2010 budget reached almost **\$10.5 million**, with **\$13.4 million** already allocated for 2010–2011. More than **\$20 million** has been committed in funding beyond 2011.

In addition, MCPER currently has more than \$2.1 million in outstanding grant applications and more than \$2.6 million in applications soon to be submitted.

2009–2010: THE YEAR IN BRIEF

INSTITUTES AND PROJECTS

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS INSTITUTE

www.meadowscenter.org/institutes/autism

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) significantly affect social, communication, and language development. In recent years, the number of children diagnosed with ASDs has grown dramatically, from 1 per 2,000 live births a decade ago to 1 per 100 live births today.

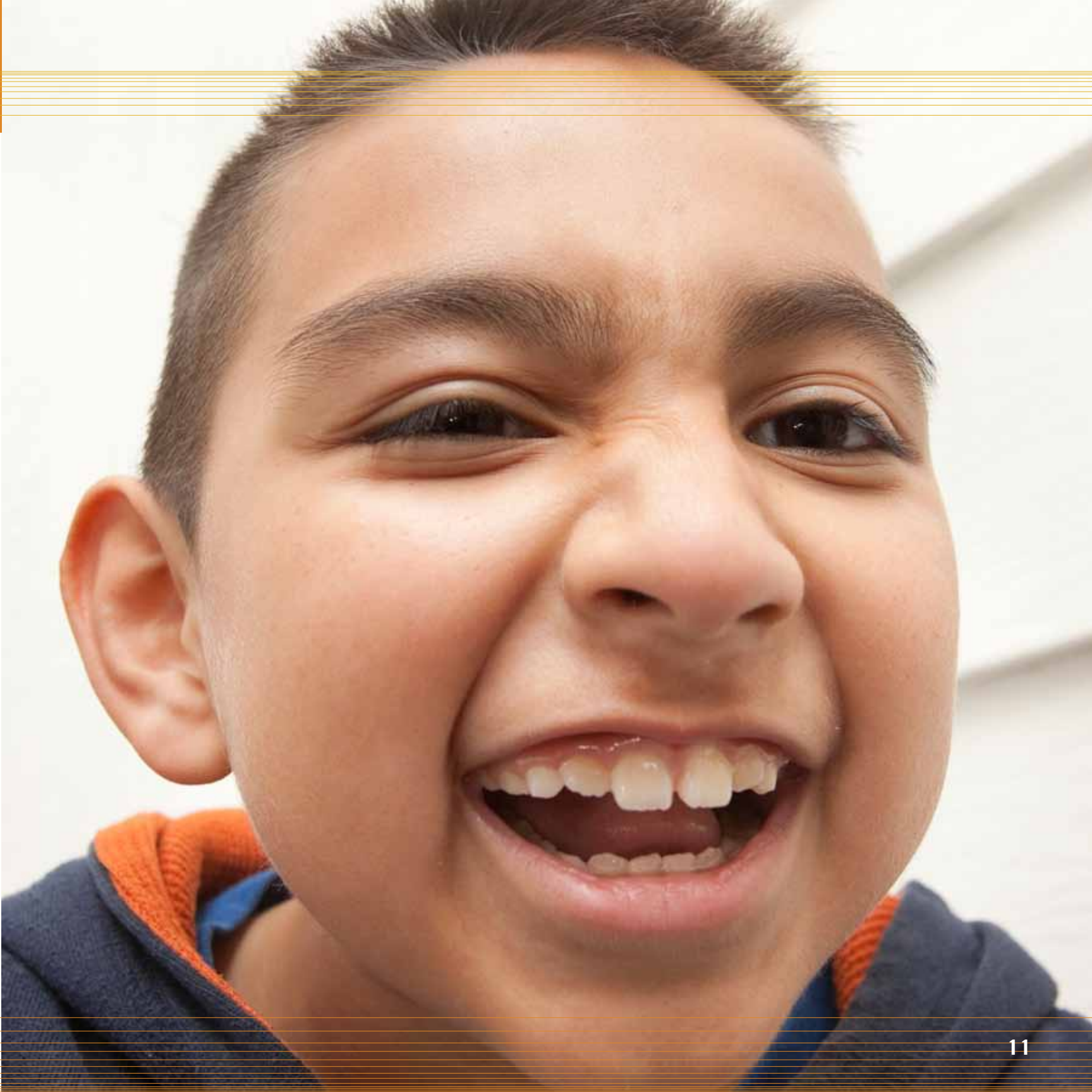
Many individuals with ASDs also have intellectual disabilities, and all display behavior patterns that can be challenging for teachers and parents. Individuals diagnosed with ASDs are clearly at risk for educational failure, and these children require educational and emotional support to fully participate in regular classroom, workplace, and community environments.

The Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute, directed by Dr. Mark O'Reilly, addresses this growing problem through research, community engagement, training, and instruction for teachers, students, and parents alike.

Research and Community Engagement

Fellows at the Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute have participated in many critical research projects. An Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute review published in *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* debunked the myth that gluten-free diets serve as effective treatment for ASDs. An article published by the Council for Exceptional Children discussed how to give parents access to sufficient, understandable information to make them more effective decision-makers and equal partners with doctors in the treatment process. Another study reviewed educational strategies to teach playing skills to children with autism, fostering emotional, social, and cognitive development. In addition, Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute researchers have led numerous presentations on the subject and made recommendations to the Department of Family and Protective Services, the Texas Council for Autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorders, and even the New Zealand Ministries of Education and Health.

Each of these articles, presentations, and recommendations addresses the critical mission of the Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute: not just to further the understanding of ASDs, but to fully engage the community to maximize effective treatments for this condition. To that end, institute researchers have begun strategic planning for the Texas Autism Research and Resource Center (TARRC), which would support families, coordinate with local entities that provide autism treatment services, and disseminate information and research regarding autism and other pervasive developmental disorders.



DROPOUT PREVENTION INSTITUTE

www.meadowscenter.org/institutes/dropout

Dropping out of school has significant individual, societal, and economic consequences, greatly affecting 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, which is an early warning indicator for increased crime and decreased economic productivity (August & Shanahan, 2006).

In response to these problems, Dr. Jade Wexler, Dr. Sharon Vaughn, and Dr. Dan Robinson, with quantitative measurement assistance from Dr. Greg Roberts, direct the Dropout Prevention Institute, which furthers understanding of the potential causes of school dropout and seeks better ways to prevent it. The institute, funded in part by the Greater Texas Foundation, addresses all levels of education, from elementary through postsecondary programs, and engages in research and product development that will result in materials and policy to guide leaders in their efforts to curb the current trends.

“The reading program is providing a necessary background for many of our girls. I can tell the girls who really need this background because they show pride when they are able to correctly read a difficult word that previously they would have not attempted.”

— Texas Youth Commission teacher



The Implementation of an Individualized Reading Intervention and Dropout Prevention Intervention



www.meadowscenter.org/projects/doies.asp

Struggling adolescent readers with low school engagement are at risk for school dropout. This project determines the effects of an individualized reading intervention and a dropout-prevention intervention separately and in combination for those students.

Approximately 400 students in three Austin-area high schools were selected, based on the following criteria: failure of the seventh-grade Texas Assessment Knowledge and Skills (TAKS); failure of the most recent eighth-grade TAKS benchmark; poor academic performance overall; and a high rate of absenteeism, tardies, and disciplinary infractions. Selected participants were randomly assigned to one of four comparison groups: reading intervention, dropout-prevention intervention, both, or comparison (typical school practice).

This project started in 2010 and will continue through 2012, with posttesting through 2014.

Project GOAL (Graduation = Opportunities for Advancement and Leadership)

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/dogoyal.asp

In addition to developing, implementing, and evaluating a dropout-prevention program for eighth- and ninth-grade students, Project GOAL is developing the first valid and reliable dropout-screening measure, the Student Dropout Risk Inventory. Eventually, this measure will influence public policy in Texas through statewide practices for reducing dropout and increasing access to higher education

for traditionally underrepresented students.

Project GOAL started in 2008 with a year of intervention development and continued this year with implementation. The intervention, in addition to evidence-based practices such as providing a mentor for each at-risk student, includes educational field trips to museums and college campuses to expose students to the possibilities available through higher education.

Texas Youth Commission Project

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/tyc.asp

Research has shown a strong link between improved levels of literacy and reduced risk for delinquency, incarceration, and recidivism. However, little research examines ways to intervene with and improve the academic and behavioral outcomes of incarcerated youth who exhibit low levels of literacy.

The Texas Youth Commission (TYC) Project aims to deliver a quality educational program at correctional facilities to meet the academic needs of incarcerated youth. MCPER has responded to a request for support by designing a reading intervention program that reflects students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs and then training TYC personnel to implement it effectively.



This icon denotes institutes or projects that were begun during the academic year 2009–2010.

MATHEMATICS INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES AND DIFFICULTIES

www.meadowscenter.org/institutes/math

The Mathematics Institute for Learning Disabilities and Difficulties, directed by Dr. Diane Pedrotty Bryant, is committed to understanding mathematics learning disabilities and to creating 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.



3-Tier Mathematics Model

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/serpmath.asp

The purpose of the 3-Tier Mathematics Model is to develop and validate two components of early mathematics intervention: assessment measures for early identification and monitoring of progress and booster lessons for at-risk students in kindergarten through second grade.

After completing the first part of the project, developing the booster lessons, and then field-testing the booster lessons in five Texas school districts, the project has expanded statewide during the last 2 academic years. A bilingual component of the intervention for Spanish speakers has also been added.

Secondary Special Education Observation Study

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/sed.asp



This project focuses on developing an understanding of the instructional services provided to ninth-grade students with learning disabilities in inclusive classes. One component of the project is observing how special education and general education teachers in algebra and English provide and adapt instruction for students with learning disabilities. The observations seek to identify planning strategies; critical content components; evidence-based instructional and behavioral practices; education plan goals; progress-monitoring data; and the adaptations, accommodations, and modifications teachers use to affect students in this setting. The project also focuses on the development and implementation of “concept anchor” tools for algebra and “cognitive mapping” tools for English, examining the tools’ feasibility and student understanding of how and when to use them. The project will lead interviews and focus groups to gather information from educators about teaching students with learning disabilities in inclusive settings and providing them with the tools necessary to access and benefit from instruction.

The Validation of Early Mathematics Interventions

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/iesmath.asp

This 4-year project examines the effectiveness of mathematics interventions among first- and second-grade students who have been identified as being at risk or as having severe mathematics difficulties. The project addresses critical questions about the levels of response expected and the research-based evidence to identify and appropriately treat students with severe mathematics difficulties and disabilities.



READING INSTITUTE

www.meadowscenter.org/institutes/reading

The Reading Institute, directed by MCPER Executive Director Dr. Sharon Vaughn,



is dedicated to understanding reading difficulties for students at all grade levels and validating evidence-based practices to prevent and remediate reading problems. The researchers associated with the Reading Institute have been significantly invested in improving outcomes in adolescent literacy and for English language learners (ELLs).

“I appreciate you for helping me out in school, like helping me on my grades. That makes me feel good inside, and I just wanted to say thank you!”

– Project GOAL student

Academic Vocabulary for Fifth- to Seventh-Grade English Language Learners in Texas

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/acadvocab.asp

The goal of this project is to create a resource for Texas middle school teachers that identifies the academic vocabulary used in mathematics and English language arts. Using the keywords, concepts, and principles in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the Academic Vocabulary project works to better prepare educators to teach their fifth-, sixth-, and seventh-grade ELLs to read and understand text, develop subject-matter literacy, and demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Ultimately, MCPER will provide webinars to train teachers on the resource and how to integrate its information into their instruction.

Center for Research and Educational Achievement and Teaching of English Language Learners

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/create.asp

The Center for Research and Educational Achievement and Teaching of English Language Learners (CREATE) is dedicated to improving the education of ELLs through the design and testing of interventions. As a national program, CREATE targets grades 4–8; as part of a 5-year MCPER project, CREATE focuses exclusively on grade 7 social studies.

The CREATE intervention uses video, writing, questioning, and structured paired grouping arrangements to improve reading comprehension, vocabulary, and conceptual understanding. The study sites are in Texas and Maryland, employing researchers from MCPER and four other institutions: Harvard University; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Houston; and California State University, Long Beach.

Collaborative Strategic Reading

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/csr.asp

The Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) program uses several comprehension strategies to improve the skills of struggling readers. Although CSR has been implemented successfully during the last 10 to 15 years, its effectiveness has never been fully tested or documented. MCPER's CSR project tests the efficacy of a fully developed CSR intervention with students schools identify as struggling readers.

During the 4-year period from 2008 to 2012, the project will track the results of 1,007 adolescent students in 64 classrooms in Texas and Colorado, comparing the effectiveness of traditional reading interventions with that of the CSR program.

Enhancing the Quality of Expository Text Instruction and Comprehension Through Content and Case-Situated Professional Development

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/tq.asp

Fourth grade is a turning point for students, when many become less interested and engaged in schoolwork—a phenomenon known as the “fourth-grade slump.”

This project examines that concern and seeks new ways to overcome it. Focusing on fourth-grade social studies classrooms, the project studies the link between content, curriculum, practice, and professional development, ultimately providing empirical evidence on how these elements work together to improve the quality of teachers' instruction and students' reading comprehension. As part of the project, teachers receive professional development that builds upon evidence-based practices and provides support for implementation.

Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/tala.asp

The Texas Adolescent Literacy Academies (TALA) provide middle school teachers with professional development in designing classes that meet the needs of students struggling with reading due to limited English proficiency, learning disabilities, dyslexia, or other reasons. Consisting of two separate academies—the English Language Arts Academy for English language arts and reading teachers and the Content Area Academy for mathematics, science, and social studies teachers—the curricula include comprehension strategies, a diagnostic and progress-monitoring instrument, and intervention guidance.

The Texas Education Agency funded TALA as part of the 80th Texas Legislature’s education-related activities in 2007. The academies are free for teachers, and they provide Continuing Professional Education credits.

Texas Center for Learning Disabilities

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/tclid.asp

Researchers at the University of Houston and the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts at UT Austin came together in 2006 to form the Texas Center for Learning Disabilities (TCLD).

TCLD is tracking the progress of students with reading difficulties and disabilities from grades 1 to 3 and 6 to 8, examining the impact of interventions. TCLD is also examining how response to intervention (RTI) should be measured and interpreted and is using brain scan technology to examine differences in neurological processing between normally achieving and struggling readers.

Texas Institute for the Acquisition of Language for Learning

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/tiall.asp

English as a second language (ESL) teachers are trained in methods of instruction for ELLs, but teachers of other content areas often do not have this skill set. The Texas Institute for the Acquisition of Language for Learning (TIALL) provides 85 secondary school campuses across Texas with a support system—in the form of professional development and technical assistance—for improving the quality of instruction for ELLs in all subject areas. The goal is increase the academic achievement of ELLs, as evidenced by improved Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) scores, growth in English reading proficiency, promotion to the next grade, and increased rates of credit accrual that lead toward completion of high school. Ultimately, the project will increase the number of teachers who can help ELLs meet the state’s expectations.



“I want to thank you for your work with UTES (The University of Texas Elementary School). Your team was excellent and so professional each time they were on my campus. Please let them know that we noticed their attention to detail with collecting data and flexibility with our needs. [We are] looking forward to our report.”

— UTES teacher



2009–2010 Building Capacity for RTI Implementation

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/brtic.asp

This project, funded by the Texas Education Agency, is a statewide resource that focuses on building the capacity of schools to implement RTI to prevent learning difficulties in reading, mathematics, and behavior. This project develops resources and disseminates information to school leaders and educators who are implementing RTI programs. The project's website, <http://buildingRTI.utexas.org>, is a professional development resource for school leaders, educators, and parents. Resources include professional development presentations with video clips about aspects of RTI, examples of intervention lessons in English and Spanish, tools for conducting campus needs assessment and planning, and parent information. In addition, project staff members conducted an RTI implementation work session that brought together classroom teachers, interventionists, and principals to create data for a simulated campus for an online professional development module. The event was highly successful, energizing the attendees and providing them with new strategies to implement in their schools.

RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION INSTITUTE



www.meadowscenter.org/institutes/rti

Implementation of response to intervention (RTI) as an instructional decision-making model is unique to each campus. As schools begin implementing RTI, they face many challenges, including planning, professional development, scheduling, and assessment.

The Response to Intervention Institute focuses on identifying effective practices and disseminating information related to successful campus RTI implementation. The RTI Institute involves education leaders at all levels of implementation: state, intermediate education agency, district, campus, and higher education. Projects focus on providing timely information related to designing and implementing campuswide RTI plans, including monitoring progress in reducing the number of children who struggle with learning.

Center on Instruction – Special Education Strand

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/coi.asp

The Special Education Strand of the Center on Instruction seeks to build the national knowledge base in areas related to effective and efficient instruction for students with disabilities—with an emphasis on literacy and mathematics at the elementary and middle school levels. The project synthesizes existing research to create materials for teacher professional development and to provide technical support to 16 regional comprehensive centers, working to ensure that all students receive appropriate instruction.

OTHER PROJECTS

College and Career Readiness Initiative: English/Language Arts Faculty Collaborative

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/ccri.asp

The College and Career Readiness Initiative Faculty Collaboratives support teacher educators in the integration of the College and Career Readiness Standards (CCRS) into preservice courses. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board established the CCRS in 2008 to specify what students must know and be able to do to succeed in entry-level courses at postsecondary institutions in Texas. To that end, the faculty collaboratives work to enhance teacher education and classroom instruction.

There are four faculty collaboratives (www.txfacultycollaboratives.org): the English/Language Arts Collaborative at MCPER, the Science Collaborative at Texas A&M University – Corpus Christi, the Mathematics Collaborative at Texas State University, and the Social Studies Collaborative at The University of Texas at Arlington.

Evaluation of Austin Partners in Education Classroom Coaching Programs

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/apie.asp



Austin Partners in Education facilitates the Austin Independent School District's classroom coaching programs. For the programs, endorsed by UT

Austin football coach Mack Brown, volunteers support students once a week in eighth-grade mathematics, sixth-grade literature, and second-grade reading in English and

Spanish. The coaches work with students in small groups, providing individualized instruction; discussions that draw upon real-world, personal examples; and structured curricula to build students' interest and ability.

MCPER's program evaluation focuses on the differences in performance among classroom coaching participants from the beginning to the end of the school year, as well as the potential impact of the program on community involvement.

Evaluation of the Social-Emotional Learning Program at The University of Texas Elementary School

www.meadowscenter.org/projects/utelem.asp



The University of Texas Elementary School (UTES) is a charter school in East Austin with a track record of effectively serving the needs of urban children. Among the curricula at UTES is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), which develops students' capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems effectively, and establish positive relationships with others.

MCPER's evaluation describes the implementation of the SEL program at UTES; the survey responses of teachers, parents, and students; and the academic and social skills of students in first through fifth grades.

“[My advisor] has helped me a lot in my eighth-grade year. She made me realize how important grades are. This year, I take my grades a lot more serious because I know that they will affect my future.”

– Project GOAL student



“We are starting to see some rewards of our labor. It is very exciting to be in on the beginning of something that could make a big difference.”

– Texas Youth Commission teacher



MOLLIE VILLERET DAVIS DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

An annual event for researchers and practitioners, the Mollie Villeret Davis Distinguished Lecture addresses current, practical issues in the area of educational risk.

Dr. Ann Turnbull, the Ross and Marianna Beach distinguished professor and co-founder and co-director of the Beach Center on Disability at the University of Kansas, presented two talks at this year's Mollie Villeret Davis Distinguished Lecture, on March 11, 2010. In the first discussion, *Transitioning to Envable Lives for Adults With Autism*, Turnbull discussed the “expected” quality of life for people with autism and the way they have altered these expectations by insisting on more. Turnbull then presented *Beyond Evidence-Based Practice: Wisdom-Based Action as a Process of Facilitating IDEA Outcomes for Students and Quality of Life Outcomes for Families*, in which she discussed how to improve care and make the vast quantity of research data accessible to all families.

At a reception after the lectures, faculty, staff, and students discussed Turnbull's research and its application.

MCPER DISTINGUISHED LECTURE SERIES

The Distinguished Lecture Series brings expert researchers to MCPER to discuss advances in the field of educational risk. This diverse group of faculty members helps to further enhance the knowledge of the MCPER staff, exposing them to the latest research in the field.

Dr. Doug Fuchs and Dr. Lynn Fuchs, Vanderbilt University

September 17, 2009

In his talk on “bottom-up” versus “top-down” approaches to intervention, Dr. Doug Fuchs explored the differences in outcomes when experienced, well-trained teachers were allowed to customize some aspects of an intervention program, as opposed to being required to implement the program strictly, as prescribed by the program developers. Dr. Lynn Fuchs discussed the findings of a series of studies on students who struggle with mathematics word problems. These studies examined the effects of reading interventions in conjunction with mathematics interventions.

Dr. Richard Mayer, University of California, Santa Barbara

October 2, 2009

Dr. Mayer, professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and vice president of the American Educational Research Association Division C: Learning and Instruction, led a discussion on establishing a research program. Dr. Mayer focused on the required and recommended strategies for establishing a research agenda that can span a career.

Dr. Roxana Moreno, University of New Mexico

October 19, 2009

In this talk, titled “The Case for Empirically Validated

Practices in Educational Technology,” Dr. Moreno reviewed the findings of a research program that applies a cognitive-affective theory of learning with media to guide the design of instructional technology. In light of the results, Dr. Moreno considered the conditions under which educational technology might promote students’ learning and positive learning perceptions.

Dr. Michael Graves, University of Minnesota (Retired)

November 20, 2009

Dr. Graves discussed one of the major challenges of vocabulary instruction: selecting the words to teach. He considered the number of words students must learn, the frequency distribution of the English lexicon, tools and approaches to selecting words to teach, advice for teachers, and how to provide better information to teachers and curriculum developers.

Dr. Gary Phye, Psychology in Education Research Laboratory

April 19, 2010

An educational psychologist at UT Austin and the director of the Psychology in Education Research Laboratory, Dr. Phye’s research focuses on using technology to facilitate personal knowledge construction. His lecture, “Cognitive Training for Problem-Solving Transfer,” went into detail on the use of virtual environments to improve problem-solving skills.

BROWN BAG DISCUSSIONS

Brown bag discussions provide MCPER staff members and their colleagues with the opportunity to examine ongoing research.

Dr. Doug Fuchs and Dr. Lynn Fuchs, Vanderbilt University
September 18, 2009

Following their Distinguished Lecture, Dr. Doug Fuchs and Dr. Lynn Fuchs fielded questions about their research in the area of response to intervention (RTI).

Rhanda Schrank, Pflugerville Independent School District
November 9, 2009

Ms. Schrank, the RTI director for Pflugerville Independent School District (PISD), shared how PISD was successfully implementing RTI as a districtwide model, as well as some of the resources she used for successful implementation.

Dr. Ann Levine, Texas Child Study Center, Seton/Dell Children's Hospital
December 2, 2009

Dr. Levine, a clinical neuropsychologist, led a discussion on the guidelines for screening, assessing, and treating autism spectrum disorders among children 5 and younger.

Meghan Coleman, MCPER
May 10, 2010

Ms. Coleman, project coordinator for the Special Education Strand of the Center on Instruction at MCPER and a doctoral student in the Special Education Department within UT Austin's College of Education, led a discussion on implementing RTI at the high school level, identifying the key contextual factors that make that situation unique. The discussion was adapted from a presentation by Dr. Mark R. Shinn at the National Association of School Psychologists 2010 Annual Convention.

GLICKMAN SYMPOSIUM IN LEARNING DISABILITIES

MCPER partnered with the Department of Special Education to host the first annual Glickman Symposium in Learning Disabilities, on November 3, 2009. **Dr. Donald D. Deshler**, Williamson Family Distinguished Professor of Special Education and director of the University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning, presented “Contemporary Issues in Learning Disabilities,” discussing the past and future of research on students with special needs. The lecture addressed the tightening of federal and other sources of funding and the research priorities for students with disabilities in an increasingly competitive funding environment. After the presentation, students and faculty members of the College of Education had the opportunity to visit with Deshler and each other to discuss ongoing research at MCPER and the University of Kansas.



SUMMER METHODOLOGY SERIES

In July 2009, faculty members from the Quantitative Methods Program in the Department of Educational Psychology within UT Austin’s College of Education presented a weekly series of discussions that provided MCPER staff members with an overview of various research methods for potential use in MCPER projects.

Dr. Barbara Dodd

In “Item Response Theory,” Dr. Dodd analyzed different ways to score reading passages in language arts assessments, including different response theory models and calibration and weighting options.

Dr. Tiffany Whittaker and Dr. Tasha Beretvas

Dr. Whittaker, in “Intermediate Latent Variable Modeling,” and Dr. Beretvas, in “Multilevel Modeling,” explored techniques and software for designing and analyzing data from experimental intervention studies.



HONORS AND AWARDS

Dr. Brian Bryant
Education Award, American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

Dr. Bryant, a fellow in MCPER's Mathematics Institute for Learning Disabilities and Difficulties, received the Education Award from the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD). AAIDD recognized Bryant for leadership in special education and development of the Supports Intensity Scale.

Dr. Diane Pedrotty Bryant and Dr. Brian Bryant
Co-Editors, Learning Disability Quarterly

Mathematics Institute Director Dr. Diane Pedrotty Bryant and fellow Dr. Brian Bryant were appointed to 3-year terms as co-editors of *Learning Disability Quarterly*. One of the premier research journals in the field, *Learning Disability Quarterly* publishes research and scholarly articles concerning learning disabilities.

Dr. Angie Hairrell
Workshop on Quasi-Experimental Design and Analysis in Education

Dr. Hairrell, a postdoctoral fellow at MCPER, was chosen during a highly competitive process to attend the Workshop on Quasi-Experimental Design and Analysis in Education, sponsored by Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and the Institute for Policy Research at Northwestern University.

Mary Ndande
Research Incentive Award, Texas Council for Exceptional Children

The Texas Council for Exceptional Children (TCEC) awarded Mary Ndande, a doctoral candidate in special education and social work and MCPER staff member, the Research Incentive Award and a \$500 grant to fund a research proposal of potential benefit to exceptional children. Ms. Ndande received the award for her proposal to examine special education teachers' knowledge of instructional and behavioral-management strategies to address students with disabilities who are substance abusers. Ndande will present her findings at the 2011 TCEC Conference.

Dr. Nicole Pyle
Cluster-Randomized Trials Training Institute

Dr. Pyle, a postdoctoral fellow at MCPER, completed the IES Cluster-Randomized Trials Training Institute at Northwestern University in Illinois. A highly competitive program, the IES Summer Training Institute trains researchers in developing and conducting rigorous evaluations of the impact of educational interventions.

Dr. Sharon Vaughn
Research Advisory Board, National Parent Technical Assistance Center

Dr. Vaughn, MCPER's executive director, was asked to serve on the Research Advisory Board for the National Parent Technical Assistance Center. This center works cooperatively with the Office of Special Education Programs and six regional parent technical assistance centers to fortify partnerships between parent centers and education systems at local, state, and national levels.

Dr. Jade Wexler
Testimony, Texas Senate Committee on Education

Dr. Wexler, director of the Dropout Prevention Institute, testified before the Texas Senate Committee on Education, outlining MCPER's work in the field of dropout prevention. Wexler provided the testimony as a part of an "academic quality" panel that included Dr. Steve Graham of Vanderbilt University, Dr. David Chard of Southern Methodist University, and Dr. Gloria Zyskowski of the Texas Education Agency.

Dr. Nina Zuna
Jay Turnbull Fellowship

Dr. Zuna of MCPER's Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute was selected for the Jay Turnbull Fellowship. The fellowship was created in 2008 in honor of Dr. Ann Turnbull's son, who through multiple disabilities insisted on living a normal life. The award is given to an individual committed to providing people with disabilities with the opportunity to live lives shaped by their own choices and values. Dr. Turnbull announced the award at the Mollie Villeret Davis Distinguished Lecture on March 11, 2010.

PUBLICATIONS

In the last year, MCPER researchers have published **three books**, **14 book chapters**, and **67 articles**—plus 79 publications in press and 36 more in review.

BOOKS

MCPER staff members published the following books in the last year.

Bryant, D. P., Smith, D. D., & Bryant, B. R. (2008). *Teaching students with special needs in inclusive classrooms*. New York, NY: Pearson Education.

Glover, T. A., & Vaughn, S. (Eds.). (2010). *The promise of response to intervention: Evaluating current science and practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Vaughn, S., Bos, C. S., & Schumm, J. S. (2010). *Teaching students who are exceptional, diverse, and at risk in the general education classroom* (5th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Many MCPER publications received national or international recognition in the last year, including the following.

Editor's Award for Best Research Article ***Augmentative and Alternative Communication***

Dr. Mark O'Reilly, director of MCPER's Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute, and colleagues won the Best Research Article of 2010 in the journal *Augmentative and Alternative Communication* for the following article.

Sigafoos, J., Green, V. A., Payne, D., Son, S. H., O'Reilly, M. F., & Lancioni, G. E. (2009). A comparison of picture exchange and speech generating devices: Acquisition, preference, and effects on social interaction. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication, 25*, 99–109.

Journals' Top 10 Most-Cited Articles

The following articles published by MCPER researchers were among the top 10 most-cited articles from 2005 to 2009 in their respective publications.

Cannella, H. I., O'Reilly, M. F., & Lancioni, G. E. (2005). Choice and preference assessment research with people with severe to profound developmental disabilities: A review of the literature. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 27*(1), 1–15. This journal has an impact factor of 4.41.

Fletcher, J. M., & Vaughn, S. (2009). Response to intervention: Preventing and remediating academic difficulties. *Child Development Perspectives, 3*(1), 30–37. This journal has an impact factor of 1.268.

Green, V. A., Pituch, K. A., Itchon, J., Choi, A., O'Reilly, M., & Sigafoos, J. (2006). Internet survey of treatments used by parents of children with autism. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 27*(1), 70–84. This journal has an impact factor of 4.41.

Machalicek, W., O'Reilly, M. F., Beretvas, N., Sigafoos, J., & Lancioni, G. E. (2007). A review of interventions to reduce challenging behavior in school settings for students with autism spectrum disorders. *Research in Spectrum Disorders, 1*(3), 229–246. This journal has an impact factor of 2.267.

Most-Downloaded Resources for Center on Instruction

MCPER created several of the most-downloaded resources from the Center on Instruction website (www.centeroninstruction.org). These five resources, listed below, were downloaded almost 62,000 times during the last year.

#1 of 20: Scammacca, N., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Edmonds, M., Wexler, J., Reutebuch, C. K., & Torgesen, J. K. (2007). *Interventions for adolescent struggling readers: A meta-analysis with implications for practice*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. **17,461 downloads** during the last year.

#2 of 20: Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., Wexler, J., Murray, C. S., & Kosanovich, M. (2008). *Effective instruction for adolescent struggling readers: A practice brief*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. **14,077 downloads** during the last year.

#4 of 20: Scammacca, N., Vaughn, S., Roberts, G., Wanzek, J., & Torgesen, J. K. (2007). *Extensive reading interventions in grades K–3: From research to practice*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. **11,563 downloads** during the last year.

#6 of 20: Torgesen, J. K., Houston, D. D., Rissman, L. M., Decker, S. M., Roberts, G., Vaughn, S., ... Lesaux, N. (2007). *Academic literacy instruction for adolescents: A guidance document from the Center on Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. **10,572 downloads** during the last year.

#12 of 20: Murray, C. S., Wexler, J., Vaughn, S., Roberts, G., Tackett, K. K., Boardman, A. G., ... Kosanovich, M. (2008). *Effective instruction for adolescent struggling readers: Professional development module* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research

Corporation, Center on Instruction. **8,310 downloads** during the last year.

Albert J. Harris Award International Reading Association

An article written by Dr. Jade Wexler, Dr. Sharon Vaughn, Dr. Meaghan Edmonds, and Dr. Colleen Reutebuch, all of MCPER's Reading Institute, won the International Reading Association's Albert J. Harris Award. The award is given to articles that make "an outstanding contribution to our understanding of prevention or assessment of reading or learning disabilities." Their article, citation below, synthesizes previous research examining the effects of fluency interventions on the fluency and comprehension outcomes of secondary struggling readers.

Wexler, J., Vaughn, S., Edmonds, M., & Reutebuch, C. K. (2008). A synthesis of fluency interventions for secondary struggling readers. *Reading and Writing, 21*(4), 317–347.

Dissertation Award for Doctoral-Level Research Council for Exceptional Children Teacher Education Division

Dr. Anna-Mari Fall, a fellow with the Dropout Prevention Institute, won the annual Council for Exceptional Children Teacher Education Division (TED) Dissertation Award for Doctoral-Level Research for her dissertation *Disparities in Teacher Quality Among Early Career Special Educators in High- and Low-Poverty Districts*. Dr. Fall received the award at the annual TED Kaleidoscope, where she was a featured speaker. The award recognizes doctoral students who have focused their research on ways to prepare educators to serve students with disabilities.

“Can Special Diets Treat Autism?” **WebMD, May 5, 2010**

In 2010, MCPER researchers published a study in *Research in Autism Spectrum Disorders* that demonstrated a lack of empirical evidence to support gluten-free diets as a remedy for autism. The study was cited in many publications shortly after its publication; in addition to WebMD, the following published articles on the study: *Consumer Affairs*, *The Daily Texan*, Fox 7 News, the *Austin American-Statesman*, *Futurity*, and *Newsvine*.

“Children’s Hospital Screening for PTSD” ***Austin American-Statesman*, July 6, 2010**

Dr. Kevin Stark, a professor in the UT Austin’s Department of Educational Psychology and a member of MCPER’s Board of Directors, was quoted in an *Austin American-Statesman* article about screening and treating children with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

“College Rankings 2011” ***U.S. News & World Report***

U.S. News and World Report ranked UT Austin’s College of Education, which includes MCPER, as 4th in the nation among public institutions and 10th overall; for special education, the college ranked 3rd among public universities and 4th overall. MCPER was specifically mentioned in the article.



IN THE NEWS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors provides the strategic direction and intellectual dynamism for much of MCPER's research and work. Detailed bios of each board member and institute director can be found on the website (www.meadowscenter.org/people).



Sharon Vaughn, Ph.D.

Executive Director, MCPER
Director, Dropout Prevention Institute
H.E. Hartfelder/Southland Corp. Regents Chair
Professor, Department of Special Education:
Learning Disabilities/Behavior Disorders Program

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. An expert in the field of reading research for more than 15 years, she originally published the 3-tier model for reading, which is now widely used across the country and closely linked to newer instructional practices, such as response to intervention (RTI).



Pamela Bell, Ph.D.

Director, Response to Intervention Institute

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 RTI. One of her areas of special interest is the use of technology to enhance the knowledge and skills of school leaders and educators.

BOARD AND FELLOWS



Diane Pedrotty Bryant, Ph.D.

Director, Mathematics Institute for Learning Disabilities and Difficulties

Fellow, Cissy McDaniel Parker Fellow Fund

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

Dr. Bryant focuses on the development of early mathematics measures and intervention research in mathematics for students with learning disabilities and difficulties. Dr. Bryant has taught students with learning disabilities and has served as a public school administrator in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Currently, she serves as the principal investigator for the Validation of Early Mathematics Interventions Project and the 3-Tier Mathematics Project.



Sharon Jackson, Ph.D.

Director for Community Outreach, MCPER

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, Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute

Mollie Villeret Davis Professor in Learning Disabilities

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

Dr. O'Reilly coordinates the graduate training programs in autism and developmental disability with program coursework 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*

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

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

Dr. Robinson is involved with several research teams in his main research area of evaluating the use of technology (graphic organizers, simulations, etc.) to enhance learning 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

Dr. Stark's research interests and expertise focus on the application of cognitive-behavioral interventions to behavior problems in 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.

INSTITUTE FELLOWS

Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute



Greg Allen, Ph.D.

Dr. Allen has a background in clinical neuropsychology, using neuropsychological and neuroimaging tools to study the brain basis of autism spectrum disorders. The current focus of this work is the investigation of cerebellar function and the contribution of cerebellar dysfunction to the behaviors and symptoms of autism.



Terry S. Falcomata, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Dr. Falcomata studies applied behavior analysis (ABA) and the application of ABA technologies in the home and school, developing functional analysis methods and communication training in the assessment and treatment of destructive behaviors. His specific areas of interest include the generalization of effective treatments, the emergence of vocal communication during communication training, and the variables affecting the resurgence of destructive behavior following treatment.



Ann Levine, Ph.D., Psy.D.

A pediatric neuropsychologist, Dr. Levine has worked on autism spectrum disorders at the Yale Child Study Center, psychiatric inpatient facilities, academic medical centers, managed care organizations, and in both public and private schools. She specializes in early identification of children with autism, using parent- and child-focused interventions to help young autistic children expand their skills and to decrease anxiety and depression in adolescents.



Amanda Little, Ph.D., BCBA-D

Dr. Little is an assistant professor in the Department of Special Education and has many years of experience working with young children who engage in challenging behavior. Her research interests include using applied behavior analysis, positive behavior supports, and intervention strategies that support children and families in the contexts of home, school, and the community.



Nina Zuna, Ph.D.

Dr. Zuna has a background in low-incidence disabilities and disability policies, working as a researcher, certified special education teacher, and in-home and in-school behavioral skills therapist. Her research interests include family quality of life, family supports and services, social/emotional development in children with autism, and social skills interventions.

Dropout Prevention Institute



Anna-Mari Fall, Ph.D.

Dr. Fall has studied special education and research methods on an international level. Her research has included educational equity, teacher quality, commitment, and retention, and she is currently studying the effect of the school and family contexts on student engagement and dropout.



Andrea Flower, Ph.D.

Dr. Flower has a background in special education, and she is currently focusing on academic and social-behavioral instruction and interventions for students with or at risk for emotional or behavioral disorders. More specifically, she is interested in the intersection of academic intervention and secondary- and tertiary-level positive behavior support interventions that promote improved outcomes for these students.



James Patton, Ph.D.

Dr. Patton is an independent consultant and adjunct associate professor with experience at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels. His primary areas of professional activity are transition assessment and planning, life-skills instruction, adults with learning disabilities, science instruction for students with learning problems, differentiating instruction for students with special needs in inclusive settings, and individuals with disabilities who encounter the criminal justice system.



Michael G. Vaughn, Ph.D.

Dr. Vaughn's interdisciplinary research has appeared in more than 70 publications related to psychiatric and behavioral sciences. His current research examines the epidemiology of school disengagement in relation to sociodemographic, personality, and substance use variables; assesses the role of callous-unemotional and related psychopathic features in reading achievement and school academic success; and develops and tests a general biosocial public health model for research and intervention applications on school dropout and educational risk.



Mathematics Institute for Learning Disabilities and Difficulties



Brian R. Bryant, Ph.D.

Dr. Bryant serves as co-principal investigator for the Validation of Early Mathematics Interventions Project and project coordinator of the 3-Tier Mathematics Project. With a background in elementary and special education, his research interests are in mathematics and reading learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities (particularly in the area of support systems), and assistive technology.



David Chard, Ph.D.

Dr. Chard is dean of the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development at Southern Methodist University. His scholarly focus is the role of instruction in the development of basic literacy and numeracy skills for students with learning disabilities or those at risk for school failure. He teaches courses on behavior management, special education reading and writing, learning disabilities, and special education law.



Anne Foegen, Ph.D.

Dr. Foegen is an associate professor of special education in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Iowa State University. Her research explores the development and implementation of progress-monitoring measures in mathematics from kindergarten to grade 12, and she has pioneered research efforts to develop and evaluate progress-monitoring measures in algebra.



Leanne Ketterlin Geller, Ph.D.

Dr. Geller is an associate professor in education policy and leadership at Southern Methodist University. Her research focuses on the development and validation of formative assessment systems in mathematics that provide instructionally relevant information to support students with diverse needs. Her work centers on using technology to provide flexible assessment systems through the integration of accommodations and principles of universal design.



Russell Gersten, Ph.D.

Dr. Gersten is the president of RG Research Group and executive director of Instructional Research Group in Los Alamitos, California. A doctor in special education, he is a nationally recognized expert in both quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation methodologies. Dr. Gersten has conducted two syntheses of intervention research on teaching mathematics to low-achieving students and students with learning disabilities. He also recently completed a research project on developing valid measures for early screening of students with mathematics disabilities and is currently pursuing research on early preventive interventions.



Karen Karp, Ed.D.

Dr. Karp is a professor of mathematics education at the University of Louisville. Formerly an elementary teacher, her research interests include teaching mathematics to students with disabilities, gender equity and mathematics education, and integrating mathematics and children's literature. Dr. Karp is past president of the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators and authored (with Van de Walle and Bay Williams) the book *Elementary and Middle School Mathematics: Teaching Developmentally*.

MCPER's Board of Directors



POSTDOCTORAL PROGRAM

MCPER's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program puts recent postdoctorates in the field, giving them the rigorous, hands-on training necessary for a career in academic research and higher education.

The 2-year program—which focuses on reading and response to intervention—involves mentored professional development; independent writing; grant development; didactic research training; and immersion in large-scale, federally funded interdisciplinary research in applied education. Fellows assume leadership roles on large-scale MCPER research projects and, at the conclusion of their experience, are well poised for careers in institutes of higher education, research centers, and training programs that focus on education.



Angela Hairrell, Ph.D.
2008



Nicole F. Pyle, Ph.D.
2009



Gareth P. Morgan, Ph.D.
2010

MCPER is a multidisciplinary research unit at UT Austin that relies on the expertise of several research centers. Its partners, primarily in Texas, each make unique and invaluable contributions to MCPER's work. Below is more information about the many organizations and researchers with which MCPER partners.



Department of Psychology University of Houston

The Department of Psychology at the University of Houston applies psychological theory, techniques, and research methods to real-world problems, advancing dynamic teaching and enhancing psychological theory and practice. Dr. Jack Fletcher, Dr. David Francis, and Dr. Carolyn Denton are principal investigators in the Texas Center for Learning Disabilities, which also houses the Texas Institute for Measurement, Evaluation, and Statistics and the Children's Learning Institute at The University of Texas Health Science Center.



Institute for Public School Initiatives The University of Texas System

The mission of The University of Texas System's Institute for Public School Initiatives (IPSI) is to improve the quality of academic outcomes for public education in Texas by building awareness and alignment between P-12 and higher education. IPSI's P-16 initiatives include innovative approaches and tools for students, teachers, and administrators to improve student college readiness, access, and success.



School of Education University of Colorado at Boulder

The School of Education at the University of Colorado at Boulder is nationally recognized for its model teacher education and graduate programs and for its excellence in research methodology, educational policy, and classroom research. Equally important are its close ties with neighboring partner school districts and with educators throughout Colorado. Dr. Janette Klingner is one of the investigators for the Collaborative Strategic Reading study.



School of Education and Human Development Southern Methodist University

The Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development at Southern Methodist University, led by Dr. David Chard, helps current and future teachers, counselors, therapists, and the community harness the power of education through degree offerings, human development programs, continuing studies courses, and faculty research on education-related topics.



Texas Child Study Center

The Texas Child Study Center—conceived by Dr. Kevin Stark, a MCPER board member, and Dr. William Streusand, the chief of psychiatry at Dell Children’s Medical Center—consists of an outpatient clinic that offers children’s mental health services, training for mental health professionals and graduate students, intervention services for families, and research opportunities for faculty and students.



University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service Texas A&M University

Dr. Deborah C. Simmons conducts research at the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service at Texas A&M University. This federally designated facility, part of a national network of similar centers across the country, supports the self-determination, community integration, and quality of life of people with disabilities and their families.



Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts The University of Texas at Austin

The Vaughn Gross Center for Reading and Language Arts (VGC) in the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin provides leadership in effective instruction through its diversified research, technical assistance, and professional development projects. From translating research into practice to providing online professional development, VGC emphasizes scientifically based reading research and instruction. Several VGC researchers lead MCPER research and technical assistance projects.

SUCCESS STORIES

At-Risk English Language Learner Turns Around His School Career

Joaquin (real name not used) immigrated to the United States from Mexico at the age of 8. With almost no knowledge of English, he was placed in third grade with minimal language support. Very quickly, he became disengaged in school.

By the age of 16, he had progressed only as far as eighth grade. He impregnated a 12-year-old sixth-grader, became involved with a gang, was sent to a juvenile detention center, and then was placed in an alternative school. He was ready to drop out of school and get a job.

When MCPER staff members met Joaquin, they immediately recognized his artistic ability and exposed him to postsecondary and career options available by nurturing that skill. MCPER helped him with school and taught him to be a self-advocate for his education. MCPER also worked with his parole officer to get Joaquin released from juvenile detention and worked with alternative school placement to get him into a district-only charter school. MCPER visited Joaquin's home, meeting with his mother and urging her to become more involved with Joaquin's education.

Joaquin finished the eighth grade and has continued to high school. His attendance rate is higher than 90%, and he continues to receive MCPER support as he strives to attain the required credits to graduate.

Reluctant School Embraces Intervention; Students Benefit

A central Texas magnet school (real name not used) had high achievement standards for its students. So when the district asked the school to participate in the study for MCPER's Center for Research and Educational Achievement and Teaching of English Language Learners (CREATE), the principal, and particularly the science teachers, were not interested. They were afraid that the CREATE intervention would water down the instruction in their classrooms. Also, the CREATE intervention requires increased participation from nonnative English speakers, which the principal and teachers did not think would work.

The CREATE seventh-grade science curriculum contained much of the same content the school already was teaching, but that content was presented in a way that would better meet the needs of English language learners. The enhancements included explicitly preteaching select vocabulary and focusing on Spanish cognates and translations.

Once the school agreed to participate, it did not take long for results to be seen. Teachers reported that the students became more vocal and engaged. Seeing this change, the teachers began to embrace the new curriculum. In addition to these improvements, 6-week test scores and Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills scores improved. Now, the school is one of CREATE's biggest advocates.

Veteran Teacher Is Inspired as Never Before

During her 21 years of teaching middle school and high school reading intervention, Gwen (real name not used) had seen just about everything. She had participated in dozens of professional development courses and was pursuing her master's degree. But she had never taken part in anything quite like the Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) study.

"I was immediately struck not just by the intelligence of the researchers, but by the high quality of the work they were doing," she said. "A lot of teachers are used to having their time wasted with professional development that's ineffective or counterproductive. But the way [the CSR researchers] tailored this to exactly what we needed was beyond what I'd ever seen. They didn't waste our time. It was very explicit, very direct. It really raised the bar for me."

Gwen reported that the study had a huge impact on both her students and her teaching. She said that she became more methodical and strategic in her teaching and that she began thinking more about the evidence behind the methods she used. She started to question whether there was a research base for her curricula and techniques.

Halfway through the first year of the CSR program, MCPER offered Gwen the opportunity to spend 5 weeks during the summer developing some of the materials to be used the following year. Upon conclusion of the summer session, Gwen was so impressed with her experience that she decided to pursue a Ph.D. She chose the Special

Education Department at The University of Texas at Austin, in part so she could continue to work with Reading Institute at MCPER.

"The Meadows Center is reaching out to grow professional capacity, beyond just what's needed for their studies," she said. "There's really a genuine interest in nurturing talent in teachers, and teachers aren't used to getting that kind of recognition. That's why I decided to join this program."

In-Home Autism Therapy Shows Immediate Results

Jerry (real name not used), a boy with autism, was 6 years old when he started a pilot in-home therapy program through MCPER's Autism Spectrum Disorders Institute. One of the biggest challenges his parents faced was Jerry's temper-tantrums after outdoor playtime was over. A MCPER therapist visited Jerry's home and used a picture card to show him, visually, when it was time to go inside. Within two sessions, Jerry returned inside when asked. It may seem like a small victory, but for Jerry's parents, it was huge.

Jerry is just one of six children in the pilot in-home therapy program. All of the parents have reported that their children have decreased problem behaviors. Parents also have said that they have learned, from watching the therapist, how to teach and play with their children. The program is open to everyone, regardless of income, so services are provided to families who otherwise would not be able to pay for such support.



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