



FOCUS on Research

Newsletter of the Division for Research (CEC-DR)

President's Message

Focus on Research, and Stories

Kristen McMaster, *University of Minnesota*

In November, CEC-DR sent out a special President's Message in light of the election results and the uncertain future of special education research funding (and, more broadly, IDEA), with potential changes that could ultimately have a significant impact on the rights, protections, and well-being of children and youth with exceptional needs. By the time this issue goes to print (it is still November as I write it), perhaps we'll have a better idea, but right now the answer is not at all clear. Here, I summarize the things that I think (hope) we *can* do to have some influence on that future.

Join Forces. Under the leadership of Betsy Talbott and Linda Lewis, we continue to work closely with CEC's Director of Policy & Advocacy Deborah Ziegler, CEC's Interdivisional Research Group, and Friends of IES to advocate for continued—even increased—research funding. Our voices matter, and are especially powerful in numbers. Now, more than ever, it is vital that we raise our collective voices to advocate for research aimed at improving the lives of children and youth at risk or identified with disabilities. We need to keep writing letters and keep calling our Senators and Representatives. Such actions have made an important difference in the past, and they **MUST** make a difference now.

Tell Stories. In special education, we have long valued practices that have a scientific evidence base: derived from systematic observation and hypothesis testing, and careful analysis and interpretation of data. There are quantitative and qualitative elements that help

us answer complex questions—not only about *what works*, but *for whom* and *in what contexts*—all guided by a process of systematic inquiry to ensure robust findings with an enduring impact.

While many of us believe that such an approach is critical for answering questions about learning and behavior and how best to meet the needs of children and youth with disabilities, scientific inquiry is not necessarily understood or valued in the current political climate. Thus, it is important that we seize every opportunity to explain what we do and why it's important. Along with providing data as evidence of the significant impacts that research can make, it is also critical to share stories about the schools, teachers, and families with whom we work, and the individuals our work is intended to benefit. Vivid testimonials are what seem to “stick” with people and can be quite persuasive; I believe they can be very effective in promoting the importance of conducting special education research. You can share your stories here: <https://sites.google.com/a/uncg.edu/cec-dr-research-stories/>. CEC-DR will make good use of these stories in our advocacy efforts.

Keep doing Good Work. The continued fight for research funding is likely to be a tough one, and the road might be long. I take comfort knowing that special education researchers will find ways to rise to whatever challenges come our way—we'll keep doing our work, even if it is on a smaller, leaner scale—and will continue to make a difference in the lives of children and youth with exceptional needs. ■

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Diversity Spotlight

In 2015 DR's Diversity Committee published a white paper titled "Increasing the Involvement of Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Students in Special Education Research" to provide researchers with recommendations (see citation below). Recently, DR's Diversity Committee has charged itself with identifying empirical studies and resources that represent the recommendations made in the white paper. These resources exemplify any one of our White Paper recommendations:

1. Develop protocols and procedures to strategically recruit, inform, and support diverse students and families.
2. Involve individuals having unique knowledge and experience with CLD populations to collaborate with research teams.
3. Consider research designs and methods that may reveal more information about the complex issues of equity, culture, language, and learning when including CLD populations as participants.
4. Include additional background information about diverse student participants in special education research and the context of their learning.
5. Develop specific plans for communicating with CLD families about special education research.
6. Improve the training of educational professionals to implement and discuss EBPs with CLD families.

We would like to highlight two papers that represent several of the recommendations made in the white paper:

Bal, A., & Trainor, A. A. (2016). Culturally responsive experimental intervention studies: The development of a rubric for paradigm expansion. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(2), 319-359.

Lajonchere, C. M., Wheeler, B. Y., Valente, T. W., Kreutzer, C., Munson, A., Narayanan, S., . . . Hwang, D. (2016). Strategies for disseminating information on biomedical research on autism to Hispanic parents. *Journal of Autism Developmental Disorders, 46*, 1038-1050. DOI 10.1007/s10803-015-2649-5

The purpose of the first article was to develop a rubric for culturally responsive research, designed to evaluate experimental intervention studies in special education. The article provides a concrete tool for researchers to examine recruitment protocols (recommendation 1), research design and methods (recommendation 3), and enhance information regarding participants by also describing institutional and social dimensions (recommendation 4). The authors gathered feedback regarding the rubric from notable experts in the field of culturally responsive research (recommendation 2).

The purpose of the second study, was to improve methods of publishing bio-medical research articles related to Autism Spectrum Disorder for English and Spanish speaking families. In the paper, participant recruitment efforts focused on including Latino families in the research (recommendation 1) and involved community based organizations to improve the study's implementation and design (recommendations 2 and 3). As a result, the authors produced material for dissemination to specifically inform diverse families regarding bio-medical research findings, making this information more accessible to families (recommendation 5).

Citation for White Paper:

Aceves, T. C., Banks, T., Rao, K., Han, I., Diliberto, J., & Shepherd, K. (2015). Increasing the involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education research, White Paper for Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Research. ■

Families Research Committee Updates

The Families Research Committee of DR has been hard at work! As part of DR, we are guided by the goal of CEC-DR, which includes “the promotion of equal partnership with practitioners in designing, conducting and interpreting research in special education.” Specifically, our mission is threefold: (a) to develop and propose mechanisms for including individuals with disabilities and their families in research and dissemination processes; (b) to promote ongoing communication between research, family, and practitioner communities by assisting the research community in understanding critical issues for families of individuals with disabilities and by assisting families in accessing and interpreting research outcomes related to individuals with disabilities; and (c) to foster a research agenda that addresses critical issues regarding families of individuals with disabilities.

Our group is an international group of scholars, most of whom are parents or siblings of people with disabilities. We meet regularly to share research and ideas, and we are planning many presentations at the CEC Convention in April. One item we wish to highlight is our reciprocal research-practice strand entitled “Creating Reciprocal Family–Professional Partnerships: Researching Innovative Practice To Increase Student, Teacher, and Family Outcomes.” This strand will include one session focused on early childhood led by Kathleen Kyzar (TCU) and Peggy Kemp (DEC), one focused on school-aged children led by Shana Haines (UVM) and Tracy Mueller (University of Northern Colorado), and one focused on transition to adulthood led by Grace Francis (GMU). We envision these strand sessions to be interactive, showcasing current research while also discussing innovative practice in the field. We hope that this strand results in partnerships that enable researchers to increase their research of innovative practices currently happening in the field while also disseminating current research to families and practitioners. We are excited to hear from families and practitioners about critical issues they face while also involving them in research we conduct to address these issues. The strand is scheduled for Friday,

and, in a panel discussion entitled “Reciprocal family-researcher partnerships: Researching innovative practice as a means to positive family outcomes” scheduled for Saturday, we will tie together the major outcomes from each of the three interactive sessions. We look forward to seeing many DR members at these sessions!

Our group membership has changed. Following are brief bios of each of the Committee members:

Shana Haines (Chair) is an Assistant Professor at the University of Vermont. Her research focuses primarily on family-professional partnerships in inclusive educational programs and with refugee and former refugee families.

Grace Francis is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at George Mason University. Her research interests include transition to adulthood and family support policies and practices that result in a high quality of life.

Meghan Burke is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research interests include parent advocacy, informal and formal services for individuals with disabilities and their families, and sibling caregiving roles.

Ann Turnbull is the Beach Distinguished Professor Emerita at the University of Kansas and is currently enjoying retired living in North Carolina. She continues to pursue projects focusing on family quality of life, trusting family-professional partnerships, and supported living for adults with disabilities across the lifespan.

Natalie Holdren is a doctoral student at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her research interests include training preservice special educators to facilitate parent involvement, strategies for supporting cultural and linguistic competence, and improving literacy instruction for individuals with significant disabilities.

Tracy Gershwin Mueller is a Professor at the University of Northern Colorado. Her research interests include fostering trusting and positive family-school

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partnerships, conflict prevention and alternative dispute resolution strategies in special education, and supporting students with challenging behaviors.

Kathleen Kyzar is an Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education at Texas Christian University. Her research interests include family quality of life for families of young children with disabilities and family-professional partnerships within early childhood settings.

Caya (Chun-Yu) Chiu is an assistant professor in Department of Special Education, National Taiwan Normal University. Her research interests include family quality of life and family-professional partnerships from an international perspective.

Katie Shepherd is a Professor at the University of Vermont. Her research interests include collaboration among schools and families, data-based decision-making, and state and school wide implementation of inclusive policies and practices, including Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

George Singer is a Professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research interests include children and youth with severe disabilities and their families, behavioral parent training, psychosocial interventions for families, history and disability, social policy and families; parent self-help and advocacy; family-school relations, and distance learning.

Jennifer Diliberto (past Committee Chair) is a Clinical Associate Professor of Special Education at UNC Chapel Hill. Her areas of expertise include learning disabilities, literacy instruction using multisensory structured language programs, working with families during the Individualized Education Plan process, and educators with disabilities. ■

Call for Nominations

Announcing three positions on the CEC-DR board beginning July 1, 2017

Secretary: 3 year (renewable) term. Attend, participate, and keep written records of bi-monthly phone meetings and face-to-face meeting at the annual CEC convention. Serve as division historian-and-record-keeper.

Treasurer: 4 year (renewable) term, sharing the first year with the current treasurer. Prepare and manage the annual budget, provide reimbursement for board activities, manage the organization's savings and checking accounts, and engage in long-range planning with the board. Attend and participate in bi-monthly phone meetings and annual face-to-face meeting at the CEC convention.

Vice-President (presidential line): 4 year term, beginning as Vice-President, President-Elect, President, and Past-President.

CEC-DR is an active division of CEC, promoting the advancement of research related to the education of individuals with disabilities and/or who are gifted. The goals of CEC-DR include the promotion of equal partnership with practitioners in designing, conducting and interpreting research in special education.

Nominations are due by February 1st and elections will take place in the spring of 2017.

Questions about these positions and their associated duties? Contact Betsy Talbott: etalbott@uic.edu and visit our website: www.cecdr.org

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