The Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development is supported by:
the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto;
Dr. Eric Jackman Institute for Child Study
George Brown College, School of Early Childhood;
the Atkinson Charitable Foundation;
and the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation.

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Background

The Atkinson Centre promotes research on child development, and the development of early learning policy and practice that serve young children and their families.

The optimal way to build effective practice and policy is to construct it on the basis of well-established science. On the one hand we carry out research projects, both basic and applied, that help us to understand development and its optimization. On the other hand through university-community collaborations and professional/graduate training, we build societal supports for young children and families. Central to the work of the Atkinson Centre is the integration of diversity, equity and inclusion in its research agenda.

The Atkinson Charitable Foundation, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and George Brown College has provided funding to the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development at the University of Toronto since 2001. The initial endowment fund created by the Foundation, established a new Atkinson Charitable Foundation Chair in Early Child Development and Education. At the same time, OISE in partnership with the Atkinson Foundation and George Brown College, established the new Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development, a research centre developed in order to link scientific research in early childhood to policy development and practice.

In the last decade, the Atkinson Centre has established a strong presence in Ontario as a research centre committed to a foundation in healthy child and family development. Our goal is to continue to build an internationally recognized centre that links science, practice and policy in early childhood. We do this through collaboration with faculty at the School of Early Childhood at George Brown College, and the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute for Child Study, the Atkinson Centre.

Recent research in well being across the life span has shown that early environments matter to life course trajectories. Combined with genetics, children’s learning, their socio-emotional competence and their health have all shown to be influenced by experiences in early life. Families, neighborhoods, schools and childcare centres are the four primary contexts that have an impact on how children develop and the wealth of our nation depends on our ability to support these four contexts in which children develop. Thus our goal is to understand and optimize the contexts in which children live. The Centre achieves these goals by developing and evaluating programs for parents and professionals that encourage child development and working with the government to generate policies that support young children and their families.
There are two aspects of the centre that provide its unique position in Canada. First, the range of expertise of its faculty members includes programming in school and early childhood settings, knowledge of government process and policy development. For example, researchers have been examining the roles of early childhood practitioners such as teachers and early childhood educators as well as the important role of school administrators and systems that support them. Research collaboration also supports the work of clinicians working with young children and families. The second aspect of the centre that makes it unique is that our members collaborate across all these different areas and forge equal partnerships that balance policy, practice and research. Expertise within each area is difficult to achieve, with few instances of all aspects of expertise residing within one person. However, at the Atkinson Centre we build partnerships that bridge research, policy and practice to enable a collaborative approach to building expertise in all three domains.
Atkinson Centre Early Years Task Force

The Atkinson Centre Task Force was convened to bring together key stakeholders to establish strategic goals that can be implemented through a partnership model.

The establishment of full day kindergarten supports the development of an early learning system in Ontario for four and five year old children for a regular school day. However, the province of Ontario has failed to engage in a community development process that could address the needs of families and children outside the regular school system. As a result, the child care community is experiencing growing chaos and disarray, families continue to face stress in managing the care needs of their young children and finally, but most importantly children face daily interruptions due to a lack of a seamless program that integrates their school day with an extended day program.

Although the government of Ontario is keen to ensure the successful implementation of full day kindergarten, there remains a very strong need to develop strategic partnerships between school boards, municipalities, not for profit organizations, colleges and universities to address the broader needs of children and families. Currently, school boards, municipalities and individual organizations are beginning to develop plans that would be strengthened by the collaborative sharing of expertise and knowledge.

Objectives:

- The Early Years Task Force will provide advice to organizations, municipalities and school boards on how to implement a comprehensive system of early learning and care for children and families in Ontario by optimizing partnerships through strategic planning.
- The EYTF will develop a strategic plan for quality improvement, professional learning and the professional preparation of educators.
- The EYTF will share resources and learning from other provinces on implementing a comprehensive early learning system.

The following organizations are represented on the Task Force:

- Public School Board
- Catholic School Board
- Municipalities
- Labour Organizations
- Community Partners
- Foundations
- Researchers
- Educators
The Atkinson Centre Early Years Task Force works to build capacity in Early Childhood with one post-doctoral fellow and two PhD students from OISE/UT, actively involved in early childhood research, sit on the EYTF in order to develop skills in the integration of research, policy and practice as well as communication. The EYTF will assess the progress of the project on an ongoing basis and will submit a report to the funders including project outcomes at the end of September 2011.
Atkinson Centre Events

The Atkinson Centre has established strong university–community research alliances and contributes to the field of early childhood through key events that support knowledge mobilization that extend our “community” provincially, nationally and internationally.

The Atkinson Centre regularly sponsors events with our partners to support public education and professional learning in early childhood education that meets the commitment to excellence in research and academic programs at OISE.

April 2011

First Nations Children in Canada: Bridging Research, Policy and Practice
Dr. Cindy Blackstock is the Executive Director of First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, an Atkinson Charitable Foundation Fellow and has recently joined the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta. Dr. Blackstock’s talk titled “First Nations Children in Canada: The Moral Courage to do the Right Thing” shared her advice and knowledge on how every person can make a difference in the lives of thousands of First Nations children in under 2 minutes. The Atkinson Charitable Foundation sponsored this event.

March 2011

Leading the Way in Early Learning
Olivia Nuamah, the executive director of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation presented the foundation’s vision for moving the early learning agenda forward. Olivia’s presentation shared lessons and expertise in community development and partnership building in the United Kingdom through the SURE START initiative.

January 2011

Stress Exposure and Child Behavioral Health
Dr. Thomas O’Connor, Professor and Director, Wynne Center for Family Research, Department of Psychiatry, University of Rochester Medical Center gave a talk entitled Stress Exposure and Child Behavioral and Somatic Health: Models, Mechanisms, & Meaning. In this he presented data on the role of early care giving in the development of children’s immunological functioning. He talked about the ways that environmental stresses become embedded in the physiology of children.
November 2010  
**Temperament, Shyness, and Anxiety Disorders: Looking for Links in Childhood**  
The Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development hosted a colloquium featuring Louis Schmidt, PhD, Director, Child Emotion Laboratory, and Offord Centre for Child Studies, McMaster University. Dr. Schmidt focused on the origins, developmental course and outcomes of this temperamental style. He discussed how work on the phenomenon of temperamental shyness informs basic theory regarding brain-behaviour relations and practice regarding the management of fearful children within the family and educational settings.

August 2010  
**The Cost-Benefits of Ontario’s Early Learning Program**  
Robert Fairholm, Director of the Centre for Spatial Economics brought his extensive experience in economic analysis, modeling and forecasting to quantify the benefits of new public spending on young children revealing some startling findings. By almost any measure full day learning is the most effective economic stimulant the government has undertaken. The Atkinson Charitable Foundation, the Lawson Foundation and the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation supported the event.

June 2010  
**The 7th Annual Summer Institute on Early Child Development: From Policy to Practice**  
The Atkinson Centre at OISE and the School of Early Childhood at George Brown College co-hosted this year’s event that included 120 participants including practitioners, researchers, educators and policy developers. Annie Kidder Executive Director of People for Education and Dr. Stuart Shanker, Distinguished Research Professor of Philosophy and Psychology and Director, The Milton and Ethel Harris Research initiative: York University delivered the keynote addresses. The institute addressed the core principles of integrating comprehensive child and family services within the full day early learning program and recognized the significant contributions of Dr. Carl Corter, the recipient of the annual ECE award.

May 2010  
**Measuring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care Programs**  
Measuring the Quality of Early Childhood Education and Care Programs brought experts from Oklahoma, Quebec and Ontario to share findings on measuring and monitoring quality in early childhood and care programs can help to inform research, policy development, and program practice. Speakers included Dr. Christa Japel, Dr. Michal Perlman, Dr. Deborah Phillips and Petr Varmuza.
Atkinson Centre Policy Overview

The Atkinson Centre in partnership with the Jackman Institute for Child Study and George Brown College have influenced government policy direction through its dissemination of applied research in early childhood development and family support. In the last three years, Atkinson Centre members have continued to play an advisory role building on the recommendations outlined in the Premier’s report on early learning, *With Our Best Future in Mind*. This report functioned to educate the government and the general population on the central influences from 0 – 12 years old that support optimal child development. Second, the First Duty Project was set up as a demonstration site for the implementation of integrated services to families.

The research and evaluation was carried out by members of the Atkinson Centre and Jackman ICS researchers and carried forward by our foundation partners to influence provincial policy in Ontario and elsewhere. The recent establishment of the Atkinson Centre Early Years Task Force brings together experts from school boards, municipalities, multi service agencies and tertiary institutions to develop a comprehensive approach toward the implementation of an early years framework, including extended day programs and child and family centres in Ontario.

The comparison of half-day kindergarten and full-day kindergarten, with and without extended day and Best Start programs will provide important information about the degree of early childhood service integration on staff teams, on parents’ daily lives and on children’s development and learning. These research and evaluation initiatives have informed the development of full day kindergarten in Ontario. Described in the research section below, we also describe ways in which we plan to evaluate the full day kindergarten initiative.

At the Summer Institute on Early Childhood Development, mentioned above, a wide range of researchers, practitioners, and policy leaders working in early childhood from provincial and municipal governments, as well as from school boards and community health settings are kept up to date with research findings and discuss the implications of findings for practice and policy. The annual symposium allows for a strong connection between research, policy and practice.
The **Science of Early Childhood**, is a publication accessed on the web, and is available to practitioners working with young children and families as well as those who train practitioners. The SECD stemmed from the Atkinson Centre Millennium Dialogue and provides an accessible resource that explains the way in which early experience becomes embedded in biology, affecting the long-term outcomes of children, including materials to be used in teaching, over 1500 individuals have access to the license and over 190 institutions utilize the resource for professional learning opportunities.

The Atkinson Centre plays an advisory role to the **Association of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario**, providing communication support, research advice and program development. Our commitment to integrating principles of diversity, equity and inclusion remains central to our work and provides a foundation to ensure that the research, policy and practice initiatives that the Atkinson Centre is engaged in meets the needs of all children and their families.

The Atkinson Centre works with the **Centre for Excellence in Early Child Development** in Quebec. Together we work on communication and dissemination of the science of early childhood.

Graduate students from OISE continue to integrate their research program with policy experience within organizations. To date, 5 students have been accepted at **Atkinson Policy Interns** and we anticipate ongoing student interest in building their capacity in this area.
Atkinson Centre Practice Overview

The Atkinson Centre in partnership with the Jackman Institute of Child Study and George Brown College, participate in reviewing content, providing advice and evaluating of the Science of Early Child Development teaching modules. SECD is now being utilized in a number of undergraduate early childhood preparation programs, graduate studies in Ontario and internationally, and for ongoing professional learning of early childhood practitioners and educators. Recent presentations include the Society of Research and Child Development Conference and the Infant Mental Health Promotion conference in Toronto.

The Atkinson Centre makes over a hundred presentations annually in Canada and abroad. Several courses for teacher candidates have been developed to improve teachers understanding of the early development of children. In 2010, a new 0-3 course was introduced for graduating students from the MACSE program at the Jackman Institute of Child Study. This course provides intensive teaching modules for educators interested in younger aged children and provides practitioners with membership to the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario.

Second, we have introduced a course into the Bachelor of Education program at OISE that deals with the ‘Management of Emotional and Behavioral Problems in the Classroom’. This is currently one of the top two most popular related studies course in the Bed program. Students are taught how to deal with behaviors in the primary years: including distressed and challenging child behavior, inattention, bullying, low executive function, low language skills, shyness and peer difficulties. The course also focuses on the impact of these behaviors on learning. B.Ed. candidates receive instruction in building partnerships with children and parents in order to reduce problematic behavior.

George Brown has established several education tracks including diploma programs, a collaborative degree program, in conjunction with Ryerson University, which enables students to obtain an early childhood qualification as well as a BA. A new degree in Early Learning Leadership will promote the need for new leaders in early learning and help establish a succession plan for early learning in Ontario. The Human Development and Applied Psychology Department at OISE, as well as the Jackman Institute of Child Study will offer research internships to George Brown students on projects operating within the Atkinson Centre. This will serve to build capacity in early childhood educators through the development of research skills that will lead them to advanced degrees.
Atkinson faculty has been influential in improving standardized observational measures of program quality that are used in childcare centres in the City of Toronto. This has involved creating training protocol as well as establishing ongoing training procedures that ensure that assessors are reliable. This has resulted in reliable and valid quality data being available on the web for parents to access. Quality data also feature in the City's allocation of funds to licensed programs with a purchase of service agreement.

Atkinson faculty have developed a program called, FROM 3 TO 3T an evidence-based intervention program created to develop language, narrative and social understanding in minority language children from non-western cultures. Funded by Social Development Canada, research on the program began in 2005 in two schools. In 2011-2012 the program is expected to be in 45 schools in the Toronto District School Board. FROM 3 TO 3T delivers a seamless, cumulative curriculum from Kindergarten to Grade 3 using children's literature and oral stories selected based on the level of social reasoning and narrative complexity. The intervention provides professional development for teachers in the development of social reasoning, language and narrative and trains teachers in the use of the curriculum. Results have proven the efficacy of the program in raising children's language, narrative and social reasoning and specifically, raising EQAO scores.
Atkinson Centre Research Overview

We have done two types of research at the Atkinson Centre. We investigate the naturally occurring processes in families, neighbourhoods, schools and childcare centres that predict good outcomes in children in order to implement these in program evaluation studies. Second, we develop and evaluate programs for children, parents and teachers. Our goal is to apply the most stringent scientific methods to the evaluation of the policy and program initiatives described above. This is the only way that we can ensure that information used for policy and programming can change the lives of children and parents.

The Kids, Families and Places study is a longitudinal study of 501 families funded for nine years by the Canadian Institute of Health Research. Families with a newborn and older child were recruited from public health units when the youngest child was born. Families are representative of Toronto families on personal income and family size, and include 47% new immigrants to Canada. Children have been followed to school age. Study findings have focused on 1) the effect of neighbourhood and socioeconomic disadvantage on family life 2) parenting factors that are influential in early learning, self control and emotional and behavioral regulation and 3) the role of immigration and ethnicity in family life and children’s outcomes. Findings are being reported at national and international meetings and form the basis for new initiatives in homes and schools to reduce behavioral problems and increase cognitive functioning.

Lessons from Toronto First Duty have made a significant impact on public policy in Ontario and elsewhere. They have influenced the framework for the recommendations outlined in the Premier’s report on early learning, With Our Best Future in Mind. In particular, the blended teaching team comprised of early childhood educators and teachers working together in collaboration, was embedded into the design of full day kindergarten. In Toronto, TFD informed the implementation of the Ontario Best Start initiative, a 10 year plan to re-organize early childhood programs into a more coherent system. At a provincial and national level, the Toronto First Duty model is highlighted in the influential early years policy document, the Early Years Study 2 as an example of integrated early childhood programming central to an integrated system. TFD findings have informed specific public policies in New Brunswick, PEI and BC moving early childhood from a fragmented program delivery to a more coherent early years system.

In the Region of Peel, a number of research projects have been underway for several years. The Peel Family Literacy research study showed the benefits of parent partnerships during the early years in the area of children’s literacy learning. Through home-school partnerships in evening or lunchtime family literacy programs, benefits were found for home literacy practices and for children’s early literacy development. Results held across school-based and
home-based programs as well as in a summer literacy camp program in partnerships with TVO Kids and TVO Parents. A new follow-up SSHRC study is examining the extent to which benefits are sustained over time.

A second Peel study builds on the TFD findings by examining the impact of the province’s Best Start plan at five English and two French language sites on system change, staff teams, parents’ daily hassles and children’s experiences and outcomes. The Peel Best Start research showed that system change toward a more integrated and coherent system of early learning and care makes a difference to parents’ daily lives and to children’s experiences. Results also showed that early learning staff teams of kindergarten teachers, ECEs and parenting workers benefit professionally when given support and time to plan together. Parents report fewer daily hassles and children report fewer transitions when care and education are integrated. A third Peel study is continuing the Best Start research by comparing new full-day early learning/kindergarten sites with Best Start and control group sites. The FDELK study examines impact on staff, on parents and on children through a longitudinal mixed-methods research design that provides outcome data and tells the story of families and schools as the province unrolls its plan for early child development.

In collaboration with the Association for Early Childhood Educators of Ontario, the Atkinson Centre is leading a study investigating the factors that influence employment in early childhood for internationally educated early childhood teachers who have completed the Bridging Program through the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario. In particular, the study will focus on whether foreign undergraduate training in early education and professional experience outside of Canada has an impact on the type of employment gained and what the barriers and supports are in finding employment and achieving professional satisfaction. Data will be collected through interviews with graduates from the program and results will guide a final report to the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario. The overarching goal of the study is to help inform programs in the future and to raise the importance of foreign credentials that educators bring to the Canadian learning context.
Janet Astington

Janet Astington’s research interest is in children’s theory of mind, that is, their awareness of the mental world of thoughts and feelings and their ability to take account of other people’s point of view. Theory of mind concerns central aspects of development, involving cognition, language, and social interaction. Facilitating its development is fundamental to children’s success in school. Janet’s current work is linking theory-of-mind research to teaching and learning in order to help teachers engage children in mindful learning.

Other current research focuses on reappraisal of the important causal role that has been assigned to language in the development of theory of mind. Work with doctoral student, Valerie San Juan, is examining the role that mental verbs (such as “think” and “know”) play in the transition from implicit understanding, now evident in infancy, to explicit metarepresentational understanding in the preschool years. Also, with doctoral student Kim Nguyen, research examines the reason for bilingual children’s better performance on theory-of-mind tasks, which appears to be due to their better-developed working memory skills.

Current grant & publications

- 2010-2012, NSERC Discovery Grant: Language and Meta-representation in the Development of False-belief Understanding.


Jane Bertrand

Jane Bertrand is a Professor at the School of Early Childhood at George Brown College, Toronto. She is an expert advisor to the Early Learning Advisor of Ontario, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation and a member of the Directing Committee of the Centre for Excellence for Early Childhood Development.

Jane is the author of the textbook, *Essentials of Early Childhood Education, Canadian Edition and Managing and Leading Early Childhood Programs in Canada*. Jane was the principal researcher/writer on the *Early Years Study 1 and 2*, a member of the Toronto First Duty Research and Development team from the Atkinson Centre and a contributing author of the *Science of Early Child Development*.

**Representative publications**


Xi (Becky) Chen-Bumgardner

**External Grants/Contracts**

- 2011-2014 SSHRC Standard Research Grant, Altering the Academic Achievement Trajectory of Recent Adolescent immigrants: An After School Community-Based Intervention Targeting Language and Reading Related Strategic Knowledge, Co-PI, with Esther Geva (PI), Fataneh Farnia, and Alexandra Gottardo, $159,717.
- 2010-2013 SSHRC Standard Research Grant, Literacy Development of English Language Learners, PI, $87,754.
- 2010 Language Learning Conference Grant, PI, $9620.

**Representative Publications**

Lam, K., Chen, X., Geva, E., Luo, Y. & Li, H. (accepted). The effects of morphological awareness development on reading achievement in young English Language Learners (ELLs): A longitudinal study. *Reading and Writing*. Co-Principal Author, Student Supervision of Lam


**Reports**


**Invited Presentations and Conference Proceedings**


Julie Comay


Carl Corter

External Grants, Contracts and Awards

• 2008-2011 A. Eriks-Brophy & C. Corter, SSHRC Research $114,238

Chapters in Books


Other Publications/Technical & Policy Reports

Invited Professional/Policy articles


Conference Papers and Presentations


Zeenat Janmohamed

External Grants

2011  Z. Janmohamed, J. Jenkins, J. Pelletier, P. Rubin, Atkinson Charitable Foundation, Atkinson Centre Early Years Task Force, $15,000
2009-2011 C. Corter, J. Pelletier, Z. Janmohamed, Atkinson Charitable Foundation Toronto First Duty Research and Evaluation, $120,000

Representative Publications

Janmohamed, Z. & Pelletier, J. (2010). Implementing early learning programs in Ontario schools. The Register, 12 (2)

Jennifer Jenkins

External Grants/Awards

Project Title: The Ottawa Language Study and pathways to adulthood: A 25 year follow-up Principal Applicants: Joseph H. Beitchman
Granting Agency: Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Amount: $545,898.00
Start date: July 1, 2007
End date: June 30, 2011

Project Title: Transactional processes in the development of emotional-behavioral regulation: Individuals in Context (Popular name: Kids, Families and Places)
Director: Jenkins, J.
Principal Applicants: Jenkins, J. and Boyle, M.
Co-Applicants: Janet Astington, Cathy Barr, John Challis, Alison Fleming, Guanglei Hong, Dan Keating, Gary Kraemer, Chris Moore, Greg Moran, Tom O’Connor, Debra Pepler, Dave Pederson, Michal Perlman, Yvonne Racine, Jon Rasbash and Hildy Ross.
Granting Agency: CIHR
Amount: $2,003,731.00
Start date: August, 2004
End date: August, 2009 extended to March 2013

Project Title: Early intervention for substance abusing women and their children
Principal Applicants: Debra Pepler
Co-Applicants: Jenkins, Craig, Lawrence, Motz
Granting Agency: CIHR
Amount: $817,940
Start date: May 2005
End date: May 2010 extended to May 2011

Publications


6th Edition of the American Psychological Publication Manual. The analysis from one of my papers was chosen for inclusion in the APA manual to illustrate the presentation of multilevel modeling results.

**Book Chapters**


**Invited Talks**


Bisceglia, R., Barr, C. L., Wigg, K. G., O’Connor, T. G. and Jenkins, J. Maternal Sensitivity, Early Adversity and the Vasopressin 1a Receptor Gene (AVPR1A) Canadian Institutes of Health Research Congress, Toronto, November 2010.


Jenkins 2010 Levels of description: Systems nested within systems. Parenting Conference, University of Toronto, Oct. 2010


**Conference Papers**

Kristen Frampton, Chris L. Moore, Greg Moran, & Jennifer M. Jenkins (2010), Joint attention as a moderator of the relationship between maternal sensitivity and prosocial behavior Development 2010, Ottawa May 2010
Bisceglia, R., Barr, C. L., Wigg, K. G., O'Connor, T. G. and Jenkins, J. Maternal Sensitivity, Early Adversity and the Vasopressin 1a Receptor Gene (AVPR1A) Canadian Institutes of Health Research Congress, Toronto, November 2010.
Canadian Institutes of Health Research Congress, Toronto, November 2010.
context on children’s behavior: The role of maternal differential parenting. Canadian
Institutes of Health Research Congress, Toronto, November 2010.
Kumar, A. & Jenkins, J. (March, 2011). Immigrant Status and Maternal Depression. Poster
presented at 11th Annual Dean’s Graduate Students Research Conference, University
of Toronto, Toronto, CA
Meunier, J.C., Jenkins, J.M., Boyle, M., O’Connor, T.G., Kretschmer, T., Pike, A.,
parenting and risky family context », Symposium presented at the Biennial Meeting of
the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), Montreal, March 31, through
April 2, 2011.
Meunier, J.C., & Jenkins, J.M, Boyle, M., O’Connor, T.G. « Indirect effects of contextual risk
factors on children’s behavior: The role of Maternal Differential Parenting », Oral
communication presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child
Development (SRCD), Montreal, March 31, through April 2, 2011.
Meunier, J.C., Jenkins, & J.M., Boyle, M. « Direct and indirect effects of contextual risk
factors on children’s behaviour: The role of Maternal Differential Parenting », Oral
communication presented at the Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR)
General Meeting, Toronto, November 10-12, 2010.
role of maternal reflective functioning in the differential parenting of children.
Canadian Institutes of Health Research Congress, Toronto, November 2010.
Prime, H., Perlman, M., Tackett, J., & Jenkins, J. (March, 2011). The Use of Thin-slicing as a
Method of Coding Observational Data: A Comparison With Micro-coding. Poster
presented at Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting, Montreal,
QC.
Wade, M., Browne, D., Prime, H., & Jenkins, J. (March, 2011). Ecological Determinants of
School Readiness: A Longitudinal Study. Poster presented at 11th Annual Dean’s
Graduate Students Research Conference, University of Toronto, Toronto, CA

Rhonda Martinussen

External Research Grants/Awards/Contracts

Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
Title: “Promoting listening and reading comprehension in students
with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)”
Approved: April, 2009 (3 year award)
Amount of Award: $116, 289
Role: Principal Investigator
Co-Investigators: Dr. John Kirby, Dr. Judith Wiener

Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation (multidisciplinary collaborative grant)
Title: “School Reintegration for Children and Youth with Acquired
Brain Injury”.
Approved: August 2008
Amount of Award: $360,000 (over 3 years)
Role: Co-investigator
Principal Investigator: Dr. Dawn Good, Brock University

Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Ontario
Title: Effects of a computerized working memory training program on attention, working memory, and academics in adolescents with severe ADHD/LD
Approved: June, 2008
Amount of Award: $149,553 (over two years)
Role: Co-investigator
Principal Investigator: R. Tannock and B. Davies (Director of Provincial Demonstration Schools)

Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) for an Emerging Team Grant in Knowledge Translation in Mental Health and Addiction
Title: Emerging Team Grant in Knowledge Translation in Mental Health and Education
Approved: June, 2008
Amount of Award: $1,415,565 (5 year grant)
Role: Co-investigator
Principal Investigator: Dr. Melanie Barwick

Articles in Refereed Journals


Articles in Press

Martinussen, R., Chaban, P., & Tannock, R. (in press). Teachers' reported use of instructional and behavior management practices for students with behavior problems: Relationship to role and level of training in ADHD. Child and Youth Care Forum. Accepted October 13, 2010 and published online in November 2010.
Martinussen, R., & Cunningham, T. (in press). Inclusive education: A brief commentary on curriculum access for students with reading difficulties. Inquiry into Practice. (This was an invited commentary for the Inclusive Education Project). Expected date of publication: May, 2011.
Submitted


Reports


Presentations at Conferences

Martinussen, R., & J. Wiener (July, 2010). Examining the contribution of spelling, reading comprehension, and working memory to written expression skills in adolescents with and without ADHD. Poster presented at the annual Society for the Scientific Study of Reading (SSSR) conference in Berlin, Germany.

Barwick, M., Chaban, Johnson, Bennett, and the CIHR Emerging Team in Knowledge Translation for Child and Youth Mental Health. Bringing the Evidence to the Classroom: Teacher and Principal Perspectives on Practice Change. (April 13-14, 2010). Quality of Behavioral Healthcare, Clearwater, FL, USA.


Workshops/Lectures


Martinussen, R. (November 19th, 2010). Invited workshop for secondary teachers at Eastdale Collegiate Institute entitled “Understanding adolescents with ADHD”.

Charles Pascal

Charles has given over 60 key notes, workshops in Canada, the US and Australia during this past academic year and co-authored a key report updating Ontario's progress in implementing his seminal 2009 report, With Our Best Future in Mind. He has also recently received two honorary doctorates for his work on early learning.

University of Toronto Part Time Professor: Current Human Development & Applied Psychology

Early Learning Advisor to Premier of Ontario: 2007-Present

The Atkinson Charitable Foundation: 1996 – 2010 Founding Executive Director

Chagnon Foundation: Senior Advisor

Janette Pelletier

External Grants/Awards/Contracts


2010-2013. Region of Peel. Full-day early learning/kindergarten in Peel: A longitudinal comparison of full-day, half-day and Best Start sites. Pelletier, J. (PI) ($184,004)


2009-2013. SSHRC Standard Grant. Redesigning early childhood services through integrated service hubs in schools: Outcomes and scaling up of the Toronto First Duty model. Corter, C (PI), Pelletier, J. (Co-PI) ($86,243)


2009-2010. OISE School/University Partnerships: Inquiry Into Practice Grant. “We all belong”: The effects of photograph books to enhance literacy development and social inclusion in early years classrooms. Pelletier, J. (PI), Morley, E. & Messina, R, ($35,100)

April 1, 2009-March 31, 2011. SSHRC – Institutional Grant. If you can’t bring the parents to the program, bring the program to the parents”: A mobile early learning program for young children and their parents. Pelletier, J. (PI) ($823.76)

September 2008 – December 2010. Region of Peel. Best Start Peel Research and Evaluation. Pelletier, J. (PI). ($205,000; Year 1 = $105,000, Year 2 = $100,000)
Publications


Publications: Books & Book Chapters


**Reports & Policy Papers**


Corter, C., Pelletier, J. & Harris, P. Stakeholder views on parent participation in elementary schools: Gaps and bridges to the future.

Pelletier, J. & Brent, J. Benefits and barriers in early education parent involvement programs.


Pelletier, J. Is this a word? Three- to five-year-olds’ implicit and explicit understanding of print.

**Invited Talks/Keynote Addresses/Media Appearances**


Pelletier, J. (April 10, 2010). Keynote address to the *Love of Literacy Conference*, Burlington, ON.


**Refereed conference papers**


**Michal Perlman**

**External Grants/Awards**

*Understanding the impact of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) program quality on children’s developmental health.* $56,000.00 grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. Awarded in March 2011.

*Developing the Conflict Script Interview.* $39,000 grant from Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada. Awarded in July 2010.

**Representative Publications**
Perlman, M. & Fletcher, B. (accepted). Hellos and how are yous: predictors and correlates of communication between staff and families during morning drop-off in child care centers. *Early Education and Development.*


Perlman, M., & Falenchuk, O. (2010). *Does the city of Toronto’s measure of child care centre quality work as intended?* Report written for the city of Toronto that changes their procedures for monitoring program quality in most licensed child care in the city.


**Community Service**

- 2011 - Advised senior members of the PEI Ministry of Education about how to monitor program quality in Early Childhood Education settings for quality improvement and accountability purposes.
- 2011 - Member of Best Start Child and Family Centres Outcomes and Measurement group advising the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) on how to assess the effectiveness of proposed changes its programs for your children and families.

**Mary Thelander**

Mary J. Thelander, Ph.D. is an assistant professor (adjunct) in the Department of Speech-Language Pathology, University of Toronto. Her research and program development concentrated on the relationship among social development, language, narrative and literacy in minority-language children between three and nine years of age. Specifically, to determine if direct instruction in narrative language and social reasoning through concentrated exposure
to children’s stories coded for social reasoning complexity improves literacy achievement. Further, she is investigating if social reasoning and second-language learning independently predict literacy.

Link to website for program FROM 3 TO 3© developing literacy through story>
Professor Thelander's areas of interest include development of social reasoning; narrative development; theory and teaching practice change; primary grade curriculum development; communication and behavioral and emotional disorder; program evaluation; community research.

Richard Volpe

Representative Publications


Volpe, R., & Lewko, J.H. (in review, Elsevier). Preventing Neurotrauma: A Casebook of Evidence Based Practices. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation; Life Span Adaptation Projects, University of Toronto; Centre for Research in Human Development, Laurentian University, Sudbury, ON

Recent Graduates

**Rossana Bisceglia** completed her Ph D in January 2011. Her thesis work involved an examination of the genetic and environmental influences on the development of maternal sensitivity. She identified a relationship between maternal sensitivity and a polymorphism on the AVPR1A gene (a gene associated with affiliative behavior in rodents). Furthermore, she demonstrated a statistical interaction between the AVPR1A gene and maternal childhood adversity in the prediction of later maternal sensitivity. Mothers who had both the hypothesized genetic polymorphism and had experienced abuse in childhood were the ones who showed the lowest levels of sensitivity. The goal of her second study was to examine contextual influences in the development of maternal sensitivity. Neighbourhood adversity, individual social disadvantage and adversity during childhood were all found to predict lower levels of maternal sensitivity. Rossana has a postdoctoral position split between University of Toronto and McMaster University.

**Kim Nguyen** will defend her thesis in August 2011 on "Cognitive Abilities Underlying the Bilingual Advantage in Set Shifting". She conducted the study in Montreal with three language groups (24 English monolingual, 24 French monolingual and 24 English-French bilingual preschoolers. Controlling for language ability, she showed that bilinguals' theory of mind advantage (i.e., superior performance on false-belief tests) is due to their better working memory skills.

**Amy Platt.** August 25, 2010. Examining the Appropriateness of the PPVT-III as a Measure Of Vocabulary Development in Linguistically Diverse Kindergarten Children

**Sarah Harper.** September 2, 2010. Narrowing the Gap in Early Literacy for French Immersion Students: The Effects of a Family Literacy Intervention on Grade 1 Children's English and French Literacy Development

**Julaine Brent.** September 24, 2010. The Effects of Parent-Child and Teacher-Child Relationships on Diverse Children's Transition to School

**Caron Bell.** April 18, 2011. Parents' Day-To-Day Involvement and Challenges with the Early Learning and Care System: Implications for Policy And Practice

**Kathy Hipfner-Boucher.** May 5, 2011. A Comparative Study of ELL and EL1 Narrative Competence During the Kindergarten Years
**Atkinson Centre Internships**

**Romona Ganathan  Atkinson Centre Intern at the Martin Aboriginal Initiative**

The Chippewa’s of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation along with the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation and the Martin Aboriginal Initiative are developing an Early Learning Program that will model an integrated and seamless full day learning and care program for children 0-6 years and their families. To support the work of the project, Romona is conducting an environmental scan that includes a comprehensive review of legislation, policy, funding and research documentation related to Aboriginal early education in Ontario. Education and early learning programs within First Nations communities in Canada operate under a complex system of federal and provincial oversight and Bands are charged with the delivery of education and early learning initiatives in their communities. Romona’s work will help the to chart the legal and policy implications of developing an integrated early learning service delivery model on the reserve by documenting the federal and provincial policy and funding frameworks and agreements as they relate to education and early learning at Kettle and Stony Point First Nations, and identifying potential opportunities and challenges these frameworks may pose to implementing a model program in the community.

**Shelly Mehta  Atkinson Centre Intern at the Association for Early Childhood Educators Ontario**

In collaboration with the Association for Early Childhood Educators of Ontario, Shelly is coordinating a study investigating the factors that influence employment in early childhood for foreign trained educators who have completed the Bridging Program through the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario. In particular, the study will focus on whether foreign undergraduate training in early education and professional experience outside of Canada has an impact on the type of employment gained and what the barriers and supports are in finding employment and achieving professional satisfaction. Data will be collected through interviews with graduates from the program and results will guide a final report to the Association of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario. The overarching goal of the study is to help inform programs in the future and to raise the importance of foreign credentials that educators bring to the Canadian learning context.