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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Since its inception in 2001, the Atkinson Centre has actively engaged in early years research, policy development and promoting innovative best practice for educators and family practitioners. Stronger institutional partnerships with ongoing support from our funders has made this past year particularly rewarding. The working partnership between George Brown College’s School of Early Childhood, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) and the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute for Child Study (ICS) ensures that early years research is influenced by the important work of practitioners and that teaching practice is informed by evidenced-based research. Our work is collaborative in nature and encompasses community-based organizations, other educational institutions and policymakers to ensure that our outputs are current and are informed by community needs. The Atkinson Centre builds capacity through its internship program that is supported by a variety of tertiary institutions across Canada. Our approach to knowledge mobilization puts the Atkinson Centre in a unique position to build on the strength of the interconnectedness between research, policy and practice.

On behalf of our partners, I would like to thank the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and the Margaret and Wallace McCain Foundation for their generous contribution to the work of the Atkinson Centre.

Jenny Jenkins, Chair
RESEARCH

The Atkinson Centre and its partners engage in two types of research. They investigate the naturally occurring processes in families, neighbourhoods, schools and early childhood programs that predict good outcomes in children so that this information may be used in evaluation studies. Second, they develop and evaluate programs for children, parents and teachers. The goal is to apply the most effective scientific methods to evaluation processes and to ensure that findings are shared to inform best practice in child and family policy and programming.

Current research areas include:

The Kids, Families and Places Study (KFP)

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

Toronto First Duty (TFD)

TFD is now in its 10th years as a model of integrated early childhood service delivery. The findings from TFD have had a significant impact on public policy in Ontario, across Canada and internationally. They have influenced the framework for the recommendations outlined in the report to the Ontario premier on early learning, With Our Best Future in Mind. In particular, the blended-teaching team comprised of early childhood educators (ECEs) and teachers working in collaboration was embedded into the design of Ontario’s new full-day kindergarten (FDK) program for four- and five-year-olds. The final evaluation report of Toronto First Duty will be released in the fall of 2012.

Full-Day Early Learning/Kindergarten

Janette Pelletier has led a number research projects in the Region of Peel over several years. Full-Day Early Learning/Kindergarten builds on research of Peel Best Start and examines the implementation and the impact of Ontario’s FDK program on staff teams, parents and children. This is a collaborative study with funding contributions from all partners. First-year results, available on the Atkinson Centre’s website, show significant benefits for parents and children and describe ways in which staff teams of early childhood educators and kindergarten teachers are working together to create an integrated team and curriculum approach that includes parents. Second-year data have been collected and are currently being analyzed.

Link: [http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/Publications/Peel_Year_1_FDELK_Summary_Report.pdf](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/UserFiles/File/Publications/Peel_Year_1_FDELK_Summary_Report.pdf)
For many years, Dr. Pelletier’s research team has been developing, implementing and carrying out research on family literacy programs at schools in the Peel region. Some of the research has involved randomized control trials. In all cases, there have been demonstrated benefits to parents as evidenced by parent testimonials and by changes in home literacy practices. Likewise, significant benefits to children have been evidenced by greater gains in early literacy development for children involved in the intervention than for a matched control group. A longitudinal follow-up study, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), is underway to determine whether early benefits are maintained.

Atkinson Charitable Foundation support
For more than a decade, the Atkinson Charitable Foundation has provided financial support to partnerships that support low income communities, particularly children and their families. At the event this week, the Foundation announced that it would extend its support and contribute more than 1 million dollars over 5 years to further the work of the Atkinson Centre, OISE, the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study and George Brown College.
POLICY

The applied research in early childhood development and family support carried out by the Atkinson Centre in partnership with the Jackman Institute for Child Study and George Brown College is widely shared in order to inform public policy and program practice. There are a number of trajectories that the Atkinson Centre leads in order to ensure efficacy in the connection between research, policy and practice.

The Atkinson Centre Early Years Task Force brings together experts from school boards, municipalities, labour organizations, multi-service agencies and tertiary institutions to develop a comprehensive approach toward the implementation of an early years framework, that includes full-day/full-year programming for school-aged children and child and family centres for preschoolers. In the last year, the Task Force launched the successful Seamless Day Schools, a film that documents a full day of learning and play for children in a Waterloo school. It also published two Atkinson Letters on comprehensive early childhood and family support service provision and produced several commentaries supporting the direction. The Task Force pursued opportunities to encourage policymakers to establish seamless-day schools to promote children’s development and meet the work/family-balance needs of parents. The Task Force continues to work toward an early learning system that includes board-operated education and care programs that are made available in every neighbourhood, for every family.

The Early Years Study 3: Making Decisions, Taking Action, published by the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation, includes the Early Childhood Education Report (ECE Report). The Report is based on Canadian and international evidence of the policy-leavers most likely to promote program quality and adequate and equitable access to early childhood programs. The report provides a snapshot of provincial early education services and is designed to inform the public and policymakers of the advances and the remaining challenges in each jurisdiction. The ECE Report is now housed at the Atkinson Centre. In the spring of 2012, an academic review took place at OISE that brought together over 30 researchers and leaders in the field of early learning and care to discuss the ECE Report and make recommendations for its future use. The plan is to reissue the report every three years.

The 9th Summer Institute on Early Childhood Development, an annual collaboration between OISE and George Brown College brought together over 190 researchers, practitioners and policymakers to examine evidence-based approaches for developing a comprehensive children and family support system. Presentations can be found at: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/Events/2012_Events/Summer_Institute_2012.html

The Science of Early Child Development (SECD) is a resource of global concern. A partnership between Red River College, the Atkinson Centre and the Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto (UT), the SECD has developed into a multi-edition resource that has been adapted for use in different contexts around the world. It is used as both a teaching and a policy-education tool.

The Atkinson Centre plays an advisory role for the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, providing communication support, research advice and program development assistance. 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 meet the needs of all children and their families.

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

Students from OISE, York University and George Brown College were granted internships at the Atkinson Centre. Interns continue to integrate their research program with policy experience within organizations. To date, 12 students have been accepted as Atkinson Interns.
PRACTICE

The Atkinson Centre, in partnership with the Jackman Institute of Child Study and George Brown College, participates in developing and reviewing content, providing advice and evaluating the SECD teaching modules. With a focus on the developmental-health perspective, the SECD provides an overview of relevant topics, current research and useful links to practice in five modules: Developmental Health, Brain Development, the Ecology of Childhood, Coping and Competence, and Communicating and Learning. The SECD is utilized in undergraduate and graduate training and as a professional development resource for the education, health and economic sectors in Canada and internationally.

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. A seminar on the early years continues for graduating students from the MACSE program at the Jackman Institute of Child Study. This seminar provides intensive teaching workshops for educators interested in younger-aged children and provides practitioners with membership to the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario.

A new course in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) program at OISE deals with the ‘Management of Emotional and Behavioral Problems in the Classroom.’ This is one of the most popular courses in the B.Ed. program. Students are taught how to deal with behaviours in the primary years, including distressed and challenging child behaviour, inattention, bullying, low executive function, low language skills, shyness and peer difficulties. The course also focuses on the impact of these behaviours on learning. Bachelor of Education candidates receive instruction on building partnerships with children and parents in order to reduce problematic behaviour.

The Atkinson Centre continues to support several education options for students including diploma programs and a collaborative degree program offered in conjunction with Ryerson University that enables students to obtain an early childhood qualification as well as a bachelor of arts (B.A.). Atkinson Centre members teach in the new Early Learning Leadership degree program and provide professional learning opportunities for early learning supervisors.

The Applied Psychology and Human Development Department at OISE (AP&HD) and the Jackman Institute of Child Study offer research internships to George Brown students for projects operating within the Atkinson Centre. This serves to build capacity in early childhood educators through the development of research skills that lead to advanced degrees.

Atkinson faculty lead the evaluation of the standardized observational measures of program quality that are used in child care centres in the City of Toronto. The results of the initial evaluation resulted in reliable and valid quality data being available on the web for parents to access.

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 and uses children's literature and oral stories that are 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. It also 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, in raising EQAO scores.
KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

To disseminate its work, the Atkinson Centre engages in multiple modes of knowledge mobilization.

**Atkinson Centre Weekly News**
The Atkinson Centre Weekly News is a popular e-newsletter that provides readers with updates on research and resources, events and news on topics that are the focus of the Atkinson Centre's work: parenting, seamless-day schools, diversity, equity and inclusion, quality assessment, and curriculum and pedagogy. In the past year, the Atkinson Centre has increased its readership by fifty percent.


**Policy Monitor**
The Atkinson Centre's Policy Monitor provides regular updates on early childhood programs and policy initiatives across Canada. Government updates are disseminated through the Atkinson Centre's weekly e-newsletter and are then organized on the Atkinson Centre's website to provide a chronological story for each province and territory.


"Issues That Matter" Policy Commentaries
The Atkinson Centre publishes periodic commentaries on policy issues written by Atkinson staff, faculty, student interns or guest contributors. These include:

- *Modernizing Child Care - Questions to answer: more to ask* by Kerry McCuaig, Atkinson Foundation Fellow in Early Childhood Policy (July 2012)
- *Pain and Gain for Early Learning in Ontario Budget 2012* by Kerry McCuaig, Atkinson Foundation Fellow in Early Childhood Policy (March 2012)
- *Proposed Changes to the ASD Diagnosis: A Review of Implications for Early Childhood Programs* by Kathryn Underwood and Rachel Langford, Ryerson University, School of Early Childhood Studies (March 2012)
- *Did we Elect McGuinty or Drummond?* by Kerry McCuaig, Atkinson Foundation Fellow in Early Childhood Policy (February 2012)
- *Corporate Big-Box Child Care, Coming to An Apartment Building Near You* by Zeenat Janmohamed, Atkinson Centre Executive Director (February 2012)
- *In Response to Consultations on the Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten Program* by Sinéad Rafferty, Atkinson Centre Intern (January 2012)
- *City of Toronto Core Service Review* by Zeenat Janmohamed, Atkinson Centre Executive Director (July 2011)

Atkinson Letter: "Modernizing Child Care"
The Atkinson Letter is an occasional series developed by the Atkinson Charitable Foundation. The October 2011 and Summer 2012 editions were produced in partnership with the Atkinson Centre. The Fall edition looked at family-friendly schools and the advantages of school board-operated full-day learning and care programming. In the Summer edition, the Atkinson Letter spoke to selected innovators to gather their ideas about the next steps in early childhood service delivery for preschoolers and their families. From their comments, the Atkinson Letter developed a series of proposals to promote the integration of early years services to improve the planning, oversight, quality and access.

- Modernizing Child Care: [http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/Resources/Publications/index.html](http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/atkinson/Resources/Publications/index.html)

Seamless Day video
In October 2011, the Atkinson Centre released *Seamless Day Schools*, a film that documents a full day of learning and play for children in a Waterloo school. The film shows how kindergarten and child care can be blended to meet the learning needs of children and support the work/family balance of parents.

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 meet the commitment to excellence in research and academic programs at OISE.

Summer Institute - From 0-3 Years: Research that Informs Policy and Practice
June 8, 2012
The 9th Summer Institute on Early Child Development brought together experts, practitioners, policymakers and key stakeholders to examine evidence-based approaches to developing a comprehensive children and family support system.

Invest in Our Future: Early Learning and Child Care for the 21st Century
April 25, 2012
Hosted by the Toronto Caucus of the Canadian Federation of University Women, in partnership with the Atkinson Centre, this event looked at the considerable evidence documenting the benefits of quality early childhood education for children. Speakers included the Hon. Margaret Norrie McCain and Kerry McCuaig, two of the co-authors of Early Years Study 3: Making Decisions, Taking Action.

Early Childhood Education Report
April 24, 2012
The Atkinson Centre hosted a full academic review of the Early Childhood Education Report attended by a cross section of experts from across Canada. The findings have been consolidated and a representative working group from the Atkinson Centre is continuing to develop and validate the tool.

Targeted vs. Universality: What Does the Evidence Say?
April 11, 2012
This roundtable brought together academics to discuss the evidence about the benefits of universal early childhood programming. The discussants were Michal Perlman (Associate Professor, OISE/UT), Jenny Jenkins (Atkinson Centre Chair and Professor, OISE/UT), Michael Baker (Professor, School of Public Policy and Governance, UT), Kerry McCuaig (Fellow in Early Childhood Policy at the Atkinson Centre) and Erica Okezie Phillips (Ph.D. Candidate, OISE/UT; Program Officer, Education, McCormick Foundation, Chicago, IL).

The Changing Profession of Early Childhood Education
February 27, 2012
This Faculty Symposium, sponsored by the Atkinson Centre, Sheridan College and George Brown College, brought together faculty members from early childhood and teacher education programs across Ontario to discuss the significant changes in early learning and the important role colleges and universities play in research, policy and program development. Faculty participation in cross-sector educator training was an important first step to ensure cohesion in professional development and teaching practice.
AP&HD Colloquium – Early Years Study 3  
*February 8, 2012*  
On February 8, 2012, Kerry McCuaig, Atkinson Fellow in Early Childhood Policy, gave a presentation on the *Early Years Study 3: Making Decisions, Taking Action* at an Applied Psychology and Human Development Colloquium. The *Early Years Study 3* documents the social, economic and scientific rationale for increased investment in early childhood education. It also introduces the Early Childhood Education Report to monitor the funding, policy, access and quality of early education programming.

**Early Years Symposium – Collaborative Practice in Action**  
*October 1, 2011*  
The symposium on Collaborative Practice in Action brought together 200 educators from across Ontario to share their knowledge with practitioners, researchers, government staff and school board officials. The symposium provided an opportunity to share examples of best practice and consider challenges that need to be addressed.

Kimberly Bezaire of George Brown College and Rachel Langford of Ryerson University summarized the key points of the day in the presentation "Voices from the Schools: School Teams Share their Experiences."

**Atkinson Colloquium – Origins of Mothering**  
*September 28, 2011*  
Alison S. Fleming, Professor of Psychology and Canada Research Chair in Neurobiology at the University of Toronto at Mississauga (UTM), spoke on the origins of mothering.
STUDENT PROFILES

MADISON AITKEN

Madison Aitken is a doctoral student in the School and Clinical Child Psychology program in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development. She is supervised by Dr. Rhonda Martinussen. Her dissertation research focuses on the relations between internalizing symptoms and inattentive behaviour. Specifically, she is examining whether the association between inattention symptoms and internalizing problems is early elementary school students (grades 1 to 3) is mediated by co-existing peer problems and/or reading difficulties. She recently presented her preliminary findings at the Canadian Psychological Association, where she was awarded the Ken Bowers Award (Clinical Section) for her submission.

SHELLY MEHTA

Shelly Mehta is a Ph.D. candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, under the supervision of Dr. Janette Pelletier. She is obtaining her degree in Developmental Psychology and Education with a specialty in early learning. Shelly's dissertation focus is on children's experiences in the full-day kindergarten program and in the Peel Best Start Program. She received her M.A. in Child Study and Education at OISE/UT, and her thesis focused on young children's perception of their own skin tone and the skin tone of others. Shelly obtained a Bachelor of Science (honours) specialist degree in Psychology. She is a certified primary/junior teacher in Ontario with additional qualifications in special education and primary education. Shelly is also a registered early childhood educator with the College of Early Childhood Educators.

Shelly has been actively involved in various research initiatives at OISE/UT for over eight years. Some of these projects include: The Shaken Baby Syndrome Project with Dr. Richard Volpe; The Balanced Literacy Diet Website with Dr. Dale Willows; TV Ontario Kids Fun for Families Literacy Program with Dr. Janette Pelletier and TVO; and the Toronto First Duty Project with Dr. Carl Corter and several others. Through an internship with the Atkinson Center, Shelly completed her comprehensive requirement alongside Zeenat Janmohamed, during which they examined the experiences of internationally trained early childhood educators in Ontario. Shelly is a full-time faculty member of the School of Early Childhood at George Brown College, where she teaches development and psychology courses and supervises students in field placements.

ADRIAN PASQUARELLA

Adrian Pasquarella is a doctoral candidate in Developmental Psychology and Education at the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development, OISE, University of Toronto. His research is focused on understanding the unique interplay between the cognitive, linguistic and the sociocultural underpinnings of typical and atypical language and literacy development. Being interested in development across the lifespan in multilingual learners, he hopes to contribute to our understanding of what cognitive and linguistic skills can transfer across languages and how similarities and differences between languages can help explain the
directions of transfer. Also, the construction and implementation of research-based educational programs—to improve vocabulary knowledge, strategy use and reading comprehension—helps bridge his theoretically driven interests with his applied interest in helping students develop the language and literacy skills needed to succeed educationally and occupationally.

**NATHALIE ROTHSCCHILD**

Nathalie Rothschild is a doctoral candidate in Developmental Psychology and Education and a graduate of the M.A. program in Child Study and Education at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study. Upon completion of her studies, she was hired as a French immersion teacher in the Toronto District School Board. After teaching full-time, Nathalie returned to OISE to begin a Ph.D. in the area of early learning in the department of Applied Psychology and Human Development. Nathalie is moving into the third year of her doctoral studies in Developmental Psychology and Education and is supervised by Dr. Janette Pelletier.

Nathalie has been co-managing the large research study on full-day kindergarten in the Region of Peel. She has been involved in all aspects of the research including study design, training of researchers, coding, data entry and analysis as well as co-authoring a number of manuscripts for publication. She has been co-presenter on several conference papers on this work and has won two travel grants to support her dissemination activities.

Nathalie’s Ph.D. thesis research will examine the implementation and impact of full-day kindergarten in French immersion programs. She will employ a mixed methods longitudinal research design that will feature kindergarten children’s daily experiences and their learning in French immersion full-day kindergarten classes. Nathalie plans to employ innovative ways to capture children’s experiences using measures that have been successfully employed in regular kindergarten programs, for example, puppet interviews, writing samples and drawings. Nathalie has been part of a team that has developed a reliable coding system for analyzing young children’s drawings from both thematic and cognitive complexity perspectives.

**SADAF SHALLWANI**

Sadaf Shallwani is a doctoral candidate at the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development. Sadaf is completing her thesis on ‘School readiness in Pakistan,’ a mixed-methods examination of the quality of early primary school environments at government schools in Pakistan and how these early learning environments affect young children’s educational outcomes. Over the last several years, she has worked as an education programme associate with the Aga Khan Foundation in Geneva. In this role, she was responsible for two major projects: the Sustainability Study of the community-based preschools established by the Madrasa Resource Centre in East Africa and the Pakistan-wide three-year research evaluation of the effects of the Releasing Confidence and Creativity early intervention program in government and community-based schools. In Canada, she has developed curriculum and training materials for a nationwide, community-based parent education program in the Ismaili Muslim community (for parents of children from birth to age 3) and has provided ongoing guidance and support to the regional teams implementing the program. At the Dr. Erik Jackman Institute of Child Study, she is managing a project on the development of self- and
social-regulation that was funded by a Connaught Global Challenge award in support of the new UT Institute for Human Development. Sadaf recently presented results of an analysis of early childhood practice and policy documents on the relation between play and self-regulation at an international conference in Victoria, B.C.
FACULTY MEMBER PROFILES

JANET ASTINGTON

Janet Wilde Astington is Professor Emerita at the Institute of Child Study, Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, where she has held a faculty position since 1990.

Astångton obtained a Ph.D. in Applied Cognitive Science from the University of Toronto (OISE) in 1985, after which she played an important role in the development of the field of children's theories of mind (ToM). She is author of *The Child's Discovery of the Mind* (Harvard University Press, 1993), which is published in French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean translations and editor or co-editor of four other volumes, including *Developing Theories of Mind* (Cambridge University Press, 1988) and *Why Language Matters for Theory of Mind* (Oxford University Press, 2005).

Astångton’s research interest is in children’s theory of mind (that is, social understanding and self-reflection) with a particular focus on the role of language in theory-of-mind development. Her applied interest is in helping student teachers use theory-of-mind research findings in order to develop materials and approaches that engage children in mindful learning.

**Representative publications**

For electronic or paper copies please e-mail janet.astington@utoronto.ca.


JANE BERTRAND

Jane Bertrand is the Program Director for the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation and a member of the Directing Committee of the Centre for Excellence for Early Childhood Development. She is a former Professor at the School of Early Childhood at George Brown College, Toronto. Jane is the author of the textbook, *Essentials of Early Childhood Education* (Canadian Editions). Jane was the principal researcher/writer on the *Early Years Study 1, 2* and *3*. She is 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* (www.scienceofecd.com).

**Representative publications**

XI (BECKY) CHEN-BUMGARDNER

Dr. Chen-Bumgardner is an Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development, OISE, University of Toronto. Her research focuses on bilingual children's language and literacy development. So far, her research has examined Chinese-English bilinguals, Spanish-English bilinguals and children in French immersion programs. She is interested in how children develop language and literacy skills (e.g. morphological awareness, phonological awareness, orthographic processing, visual perception and memory, vocabulary, word reading and reading comprehension) simultaneously in their first language and second language and how these skills transfer between the two languages.

Representative publications
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 Geva, E., Farnia, F. & Gottardo, A. ($159,717)

2010-2013 – SSHRC Standard Research Grant. “Literacy Development of English Language Learners.” (PI) ($87,754)

JULIE COMAY

Julie Comay is a Teacher/Researcher at the Institute of Child Study Laboratory School, University of Toronto. Her current areas of interest include children’s theory of mind, narrative development, early literacy, play, and early mathematics development. She is also interested in working with teachers to explore more effective ways of applying developmental research in designing classroom curricula. The bulk of her research has focused on the developmental relations among language, theory of mind and narrative skill. For several years, she has been part of a longitudinal research study (with Mary Thelander) investigating the impact of a story-based curriculum on children’s language and theory-of-mind development. She has recently become involved with the Math for Young Children initiative, a research partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Education aiming to enhance mathematics education in early years classrooms.

Representative research presentations
CARL CORTER

Carl Corter is interested in improving policy and professional education to support children and families. His research has focused on integrated early childhood services in the community, including child care and kindergarten as well as on parenting and parental involvement in schools and other services. His current research examines policy and practice directed at the development of self- and social-regulation in early learning settings. He is Professor of Applied Psychology and Human Development at the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study.

Current research grants & contracts


Recent publications

PATRICIA GANEA

Patricia Ganea is Assistant Professor at the Dr. Jackman Institute of Child Study and the Department of Applied Psychology and Human Development at OISE, University of Toronto. Dr. Ganea is a developmental psychologist who studies children’s learning, language development and symbolic development. At the Language and Learning Lab at ICS, Dr. Ganea and her research team investigate the processes involved in young children's learning about the world through symbolic means, such as language, pictures, videos and replica objects.

Recent publications


ZEENAT JANMOHAMED

Zeenat Janmohamed is a co-investigator with Toronto First Duty, a research and evaluation program that explores the integration of early learning and family support programs for children and families in schools, child care and family resource programs. Zeenat is an advisor to the Science of Early Child Development, a partnership between the Atkinson Centre, the Jackman Institute of Child Study, Red River College and George Brown College, that promotes the connectivity between human interactions and early development in research, policy and practice. Zeenat has acted as an advisor on a number of social policy projects.

Zeenat’s international experience includes program development and professional learning for kindergarten and early childhood educators in Bosnia; program evaluation of family support programs in Kosovo; early childhood field supervision in Jamaica; and teaching early child development at BRAC University in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Zeenat’s area of teaching expertise includes early child development; advocacy, policy and governance; and diversity, equity and inclusion. Zeenat’s area of doctoral research is focused on examining the experiences of diverse parents in early years settings. Zeenat has published in the area of systems integration, early childhood training and diversity. She has presented widely on early child development, professional training of educators, diversity and difference and the connections between research, policy and practice.

Representative publications


JENNIFER JENKINS

Professor Jennifer Jenkins is the Atkinson Chair of Early Child Development and Education and Director of the Atkinson Centre at the University of Toronto. She is a clinical and developmental psychologist. Her research has examined the influence of marital, parental and sibling relationships on developmental health. She studies why some children are more resilient than others when growing up in high-risk environments and is particularly interested in within-family differences in development. She is the Director of Kids, Families, Places, a longitudinal, birth-cohort study that includes older siblings. Its goal is to understand the interaction of biological, family and broader contextual risk in children’s socio-emotional trajectories. She is a co-author, with Keith Oatley and Dacher Keltner, of Understanding Emotions.
Awards of graduate students under her supervision in 2012
• Dillon Browne, Vanier Doctoral Fellowship ($150,000 over three years)
• Sheri Madigan, Ph.D., Banting Postdoctoral Fellowship ($140,000 over two years)
• Mark Wade, CIHR Postdoctoral fellowship ($105,000 over three years)
• Heather Prime, SSHRC Postdoctoral fellowship ($105,000 over three years)

Recent publications

Popular publication pieces (students working under supervision)
Grants


RHONDA MARTINUSSEN

Rhonda’s research interests focus on developing a better understanding of the individual difference and contextual factors that are associated with academic achievement in children with attention and/or learning difficulties. Specifically, she is interested in research examining the role of cognitive (e.g. working memory) and affective (e.g. motivation) factors in learning (e.g. reading, writing). She is also exploring listening and reading comprehension in youth with and without attention and/or learning difficulties and the effects of different types of graphic organizers on comprehension of expository text.

Rhonda is interested in working collaboratively with teachers to build capacity regarding the instruction of students with attention and/or learning difficulties. She is currently part of a research team that is working on two knowledge-exchange projects. One project is examining how to use multimedia resources to support teacher professional development, regarding working with students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The second project is examining how to use multimedia in teacher education related to early literacy instruction. In addition, her research on cognition, attention and adaptive instruction has direct implications for classroom instruction in the elementary grades.

Current research grants & contracts
2009-2012 – Social Science and Humanities Research Council grant. “Promoting Listening and Reading Comprehension in Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).” Martinussen, R. (P.I.) and Wiener, J. & Kirby, J.


Representative publications


Martinussen, R., Chaban, P. & Tannock, R. (2011). 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, 40,* 193-219.


**Recent poster publications**


**KERRY MCCUAIG**

Kerry McCuaig is the Atkinson Charitable Foundation's Fellow in Early Childhood Policy, working with the Atkinson Centre at OISE. She is co-author of *Early Years Study 3, Making Decisions, Taking Action* with Margaret McCain and Fraser Mustard. Kerry has had a long involvement in early childhood policy development including as communications manager for Toronto First Duty, a pioneer in the integrated delivery of early childhood programming that supports similar integrated ECE service models in Atlantic Canada.

Kerry has many years of advocacy, public education and communication experience, speaking widely on a variety of early childhood policy issues. She has authored several publications and articles including *From Patchwork to Framework: An Early Learning and Child Care Strategy for Canada* and *Zero to Six: The Foundation for School Success* published by The Learning Partnership. She was a principal researcher/writer for the *Early Years Study 2*, the Commission on Early Learning and Child Care for the City of Toronto, and *Early Learning and Child Care in the City*, published by George Brown College and the Toronto Board of Trade. Her other work includes an examination of provincial policy initiatives on early childhood service delivery; the impact of welfare policies on family child care; an overview of workplace child care initiatives; the challenges of providing child care services outside of non-traditional hours and effective tax policies for families.
Kerry was an advisor on *With Our Best Future in Mind*, a policy blueprint on full day learning in Ontario. She is a sessional teacher in the ECE degree program at George Brown College and also acts an advisor to the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation.

**Recent publications**
McCuaig, K. (in press). Serving all children to catch the most vulnerable. *Health Quarterly*.

**CHARLES PASCAL**

Charles has given over 60 keynote addresses and workshops in Canada, the US and Australia during this past academic year. He has also 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, Human Development and Applied Psychology (Present)
- Early Learning Advisor to Premier of Ontario (2007-Present)
- Founding Executive Director, Atkinson Charitable Foundation (1996-2010)
- Senior Advisor, Chagnon Foundation

**JANETTE PELLETIER**

Janette Pelletier, Ph.D., is the Director of the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study. Her research interests are in the area of early child development and education. Her current longitudinal research project is examining the implementation and impact of Full-Day Early Learning Kindergarten in collaboration with the Region of Peel, the Peel District and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Boards. This work builds on research in Toronto First Duty and Peel Best Start which describes the design, implementation and evaluation of innovative integrated approaches to kindergarten, child care and parenting supports. Another of her major focuses has been on parent involvement and its relation to children’s learning in kindergarten and primary classes, including a longitudinal study of family literacy programs. Her research includes participants from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, many of whom are recent immigrants to Canada. This research extends to other second language contexts such as early French immersion. A related area of her research is young children’s literacy development and communication through writing and drawing.

**Applied clinical interests**
She is a former elementary classroom teacher in English and French-immersion contexts and a former school psychologist. Her research is carried out in and applies directly to kindergarten and primary classrooms. She is also engaged in program and policy research in the area of early learning and care.
Current research grants & contracts

2011-2014 – National Science Foundation (Group grant led by Jianwei Zhang, SUNY Albany). “Fostering Collective Progress in Online Discourse for Sustained Knowledge Building.” ($550,000)


Representative publications


**MICHAL PERLMAN**

Michal’s research program revolves around two sets of questions. One attempts to identify constructs that determine quality in child care settings, developing empirically based measures of those constructs and linking child care quality to child outcomes. The other line of research focuses on understanding the origins of young children's conflict behaviours, with particular emphasis on children's perspective taking. Recently, she has begun merging these research areas by studying perspective taking and conflict resolution in child care centres. She is interested in both basic and applied research. She is also interested in the use of diverse research methodologies and is involved in research that addresses micro-level social processes based on intensive observational data as well as large-scale-survey research studies.

**External grants and awards**
March 2011 – Canadian Institutes of Health Research. “Understanding the Impact of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Program Quality on Children’s Developmental Health.” ($56,000)

July 2010 – Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada. “Developing the Conflict Script Interview.” ($39,000)

**Representative publications**

Community service
• 2011 – Advised senior members of the P.E.I. 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 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. It focuses specifically on determining 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 whether social reasoning and second-language learning independently predict literacy.

Professor Thelander's areas of interest include development of social reasoning; narrative development; theory and teaching practice change; primary-grade curriculum development; communication and behavioural and emotional disorders; program evaluation; and community research.

RICHARD VOLPE

Richard’s research addresses how early experience impacts on later life. His current investigations of life-span development include shaken baby syndrome prevention, community-based broad spectrum head and spinal cord injury prevention, youth identity, theory-practice connections, and integrated services.

Representative publications


VISITING SCHOLAR

Dr. Margarita Stolarova  
Junior Research Group Leader  
Early Childhood Development and Education, Zukunftskolleg, University of Konstanz (Germany)

My visit to the Atkinson Center between April and July 2012 is funded by the Ministry of Science, Research and Art, Baden-Württemberg, Germany within the Ontario/Baden-Württemberg Faculty Mobility Program. As a developmental neuropsychologist with an interest in early development and education, I came to the Atkinson Center in order to learn more about the application of scientific knowledge in the praxis of Early Childhood Education. Since I am currently involved in building an information platform for parents of children with special needs in Bulgaria, I was specifically interested in the topic of inclusion in preschool settings and in the support systems available in Canada to families of children with special needs. During the three and a half months I spent in Toronto, I met researchers, policy advisors, practitioners and parents and children. I visited several child care centers and preschools, and I gained insight into two evaluation indices in the field of inclusion and early childhood education. I am returning to Germany with new research ideas, and I am confident that my collaboration with researchers at the Atkinson Centre and practitioners in Toronto will continue. Most importantly, during my visit to Toronto, I was able to experience how research, policy and educational practices interact and converge into very concrete early childhood inclusion practices. I am very grateful for the support I received from the Atkinson Centre, and I will keep following the research originating here.
INTERNSHIPS

The Atkinson Centre Internships were established with the support of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation to build the knowledge capacity of students in early childhood policy development. The purpose of the Atkinson Internships includes providing students with stronger training and key skills to bolster their experience and to strengthen their understanding of policy implications on children and families. The internships are also expected to support opportunities for pre-employment experience.

ZOUBAYDA CHOUCAIR
_B.A. Candidate and Atkinson Centre Intern 2012_
Zoubayda completed her Early Childhood Education Diploma at George Brown College in 2011. She is currently in her third year of the Early Childhood Leadership Program (B.A.) at George Brown College. Zoubayda has developed an interest in early learning and technology. In her independent study project, she hopes to examine the barriers early childhood educators face in providing children with experiences using technology to foster positive relationships between nature-based learning and gesture-based learning. During her Atkinson Centre internship at OISE, she wants to build and strengthen her knowledge of early childhood policy development and its implications for the ecology of the child and their family.

SHERRIKA COOPER
_B.A. Candidate and Atkinson Centre Intern 2012_
Sherrika completed her Early Childhood Education diploma at George Brown College in 2009. She is currently in her third year of the Early Childhood Leadership Program (B.A.) at George Brown College. She has recently developed an interest in advocacy in early learning and full-day kindergarten and is particularly interested in how this new program will impact the children and the families involved. During her Atkinson Centre internship at OISE, she wants to strengthen her advocacy skills and increase her knowledge of research and public policy in early learning.

JOANNE MURRELL
_M.A. Candidate and Atkinson Centre Intern 2012_
Joanne is an M.A. student at the University of Victoria, B.C., in the school of Child and Youth Care. Joanne is an ECE with a B.A. (honours) from Ryerson University and a National Nursery Examination Board diploma from the United Kingdom. Joanne's research interest is quality in early childhood programs and services. She is interested in early childhood policy, service integration, advocacy, and training.

SINÉAD RAFFERTY
_M.E.S Candidate and Atkinson Centre Intern 2012_
Sinéad is a registered early childhood educator and is currently in her first year of the master’s of Environmental Studies (M.E.S) program at York University. Her research interests are in integrating ecological literacy in early childhood education, both for the early learning and care programs, and at the post-secondary level for early childhood educators in training. In particular, she is interested in examining the potential limits and barriers early childhood education programs face in providing children with experiences that foster positive
relationships with the natural world. Sinéad hopes to contribute to building awareness among early childhood educators about the important health and psychological benefits of providing outdoor, nature-based learning experiences for children in the early years. As a member of the Atkinson team, Sinéad is excited to support research and policy initiatives that support healthy, holistic learning for young children and their families.

**FRESHTEH BIBISHAHRBANOU**

**B.A. Candidate and Atkinson Centre Intern 2011**

Freshteh is a registered early childhood educator at a George Brown College Lab School/Early Learning Centre. She has worked with kindergarten-aged children and had developed an expertise in the area of literacy and numeracy. She has a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Delhi, India; has completed an early childhood education diploma program at George Brown College; and is currently in the final year of a Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education at Ryerson University. Freshteh completed a full-day kindergarten practicum at the TDSB in early 2011, during which she developed an interest in the professional relationship between ECEs and teachers. Through her Atkinson Centre internship, she is looking forward to being involved in research projects.

**SHELLY MEHTA**

**Ph.D. Candidate and Atkinson Centre Intern at the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario 2011**

In collaboration with the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, Shelly is coordinating a study investigating the factors that influence employment in early childhood for foreign-trained educators who have completed the Access 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. It also focuses on identifying the barriers and supports to finding employment and achieving professional satisfaction. Data will be collected through interviews with graduates of the program, and the results will guide a final report for the Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario. The overarching goal of the study is to help inform future programs and to raise the importance of foreign credentials that educators bring to the Canadian learning context.

**HEATHER PRIME**

**M.A. Candidate and Atkinson Centre Intern 2011**

Heather is currently in her second year of the M.A. in School and Child Clinical Psychology at OISE/UT. Her research examines the familial influences on children's psychological development. In particular, she is interested in how parental and sibling scaffolding influences children's cognitive outcomes, as well as how levels of scaffolding vary depending on the level of risk in the home. She has recently developed a behavioural-observation measure of scaffolding for parents and siblings that utilizes a thin-slice approach (i.e. quick, impressionistic judgments). Clinically, Heather is doing a practicum in the TDSB, conducting psycho-educational assessments, and implementing interventions for school-aged children. Heather is happy to be part of the Atkinson team and hopes to contribute to bridging research, clinical and policy domains to better serve children and adolescents.
MARK WADE  
*M.A. Candidate and Atkinson Centre Intern 2011*  
Mark is currently in his second year of the M.A. program in School and Clinical Child Psychology at OISE/UT. His research examines the effect of genetic and environmental influences on children’s ToM development. In particular, he is interested in how genetic risk factors combine with environmental adversity (e.g. socioeconomic disadvantage and poor parenting) to influence ToM. He is also interested in identifying ‘precursors’ to ToM, that is, early abilities that are required for later development of ToM. Collectively, this research can help determine which children are at risk for ToM impairments. This is important since ToM deficits in children have been linked to social difficulties, behaviour problems and autism spectrum disorder. Mark is also completing a practicum in the Toronto District School Board, where he works with many children who show these kinds of difficulties. As a member of the Atkinson team, Mark hopes his research can inform early intervention and policy efforts aimed at improving child outcomes.
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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