

## Creating Connections...

Among National Leaders of Family-School Partnership Research

CYFS spearheaded efforts to forge ties and unify research in the family-school partnership field when it hosted more than 20 leading scholars at a national meeting held September 19-21 in Omaha, Nebraska.

The meeting served as a starting point for synthesizing and reconceptualizing definitions of family-school partnerships, identifying the means by which they function, and pinpointing methods for translating partnership research into practice. In doing so, participants addressed research gaps that have slowed the discipline's progress and began mapping directions for future scholarship. They also discussed the formation of the Interdisciplinary Alliance for Partnerships Research (IAPR), an academic network aimed at maintaining the collaborative momentum initiated by the research meeting.

Consisting of 11 presentations and numerous roundtable discussions, the meeting featured researchers from 18 academic institutions. These scholars represented the full spectrum of academic disciplines – including education,



psychology, early intervention, prevention, sociology and methodology – that have shaped the course of family-school research over the last 30 years.

“For me, the theme of partnership carried over to what was so great about the meeting: psychologists partnering with scientists from other disciplines, basic researchers partnering with interventionists, family-focused researchers partnering with school-focused researchers,” said Dr. Robert Crosnoe, Professor of Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. “These are the kinds of connections that need to be

made if we are going to be able to understand family-school partnerships from all angles and then do something with that understanding.”

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## Director's Note

*“Where there is an open mind, there will always be a frontier.”* **Charles F. Kettering**

The acquisition of new knowledge originates from a willingness to explore the uncharted while looking beyond existing horizons. At CYFS, we are fortunate to claim researchers who dedicate themselves to pioneering new frontiers. They catalyze conversations among leaders of a field in need of consensus. They reach out to teachers and underserved students in isolated rural communities. They shine initial light on the inner workings of early childhood coaching. This edition of *CYFS Reflections* maps these first steps – and serves as an appreciative tribute to those with the vision and determination to take them.

Susan M. Sheridan, PhD  
George Holmes University Professor of Educational Psychology  
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# THE CUTTING EDGE...

## Of Improving Deaf Education in Rural Schools



CYFS faculty affiliate Malinda Eccarius recently received a four-year, \$1.2 million U.S. Department of Education grant aimed at helping 25 rural K-12 instructors earn teaching endorsements in deaf education.

Eccarius' "Mountain Prairie Upgrade Partnership-Itinerant" (MPUP-I) project will prepare instructors in regular and special education to become itinerant teachers – those qualified to assist students who are deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) but take classes with their hearing peers.

MPUP-I is primed to address the severe shortage of itinerant teachers that has resulted from retirements and the record number of students who are D/HH transferring to traditional classrooms. The project is specifically targeting teachers from rural Plains and Midwestern communities, which are in especially dire straits due to the recruiting barriers of distance and limited resources. Along with the teaching endorsement, participants who complete the program will have the option of earning a master's degree in special education.

The program will give participants the tools to cultivate listening and spoken language skills in a diverse range of students who are D/HH, including those with multiple disabilities. It will also help participants collaborate with the families, classroom teachers and service providers who work with these students on a regular basis. In addition to offering courses on instruction, consultation and multiple disabilities, MPUP-I will feature itinerant student-teaching opportunities and mentors who model effective practices.

Just like the rural schools Eccarius aims

to assist, MPUP-I faces the challenge of recruiting participants from great distances. In order to do so – and contend with the full-time jobs of many potential applicants – Eccarius will offer the program's entire curriculum online.

"Teachers who are most likely to want to work in rural areas are those who already live there," Eccarius noted. "Living in a rural area, however, means not being able to attend on-campus courses. Distance education brings the classes to the students. They also do their practicum locally, making them highly visible to local administrators."

CYFS Research Assistant Professor Greg Welch, a member of the Center's Statistics and Research Methodology Unit, will evaluate the results of the project. Numerous faculty from the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders, including CYFS affiliates Christine Marvin, Reece Petersen and Ellin Siegel, will teach MPUP-I courses.

Having been involved with two previous MPUP projects, Eccarius sees MPUP-I as a natural continuation of her efforts to improve the quality of education for students who are D/HH.

"MPUP-I is an exciting, innovative opportunity to prepare today's teachers to serve tomorrow's deaf and hard of hearing children."

## Research Digest **Chris Kratochvil**

**Kratochvil, C. J.,** May, D. E., Silva, S. G., Madaan, V., Puumala, S. E., Curry, J. F., et al. (2009). Treatment response in depressed adolescents with and without co-morbid attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder in the Treatment for Adolescents with Depression study. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology*, 19(5), 519-528.

Previous research has shown that adolescents diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder are more likely to experience a depressive disorder than peers without ADHD. However, there is a lack of research supporting any one treatment for adolescents experiencing co-morbid ADHD and major depressive disorder (MDD). The present study compared the effectiveness of four randomized treatments for improving depressive and ADHD symptoms in adolescents with these co-morbid disorders. The researchers hypothesized that adolescents with co-morbid ADHD and MDD would be less likely to respond, or would respond differently, to treatment across the initial blinded portion of study and the duration

of the study. They also hypothesized that these youth would exhibit a greater severity of symptoms, experience higher levels of impairment, show increased suicidality, and be more likely to drop out of treatment.

The current study examined a subset of the sample in the Treatment for Adolescents with Depression Study (TADS), which was conducted with 439 depressed adolescents ages 12-17 over a three-year period. The subset of the TADS population examined for this study consisted of 62 participants with co-morbid ADHD, 20 of who were taking a psychostimulant medication at the onset of the study. The study began with a 12-week randomized trial of fluoxetine, cognitive-behavior therapy (CBT), a combination of both, or a placebo pill. Participants receiving medication, CBT, or the combination continued with their assigned treatment for a total of 36 weeks. Those receiving the placebo were discontinued after the initial 12-week period.

Results showed that having a diagnosis of ADHD moderated the improvement in

depression over the initial 12-week treatment period. For participants without co-morbid ADHD who participated in the original TADS study, the combination of fluoxetine plus CBT was optimal. Either treatment alone resulted in no greater improvement than the placebo. However, for the group in the present study with co-morbid ADHD, all three active treatment conditions resulted in equivalent gains, and all outperformed the placebo. Looking at the observed changes over 36 weeks, all three active treatments resulted in similar gains regardless of co-morbid ADHD. The secondary hypotheses were not supported. Future research should replicate this study, as the small number of participants limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the study. Clinically, the use of fluoxetine, CBT, or a combination of these may all be effective initial treatments for adolescents with co-morbid depression and ADHD.

*Study reviewed and summarized by Lynne Clure, CYFS graduate student affiliate.*

# CYFS CELEBRATIONS

## Grants Submitted (July-Dec. 2010)

**Sue Ellen DeChenne, Gina Kunz, Gwen Nugent, Jon Pedersen and Laurence Rilett**, *Coaching Science Inquiry Professional Development*, Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

**J. Ron Nelson, Ockjean Kim and Tiffany Hogan**, *Early Vocabulary Connections, Plus: A Tier II Intervention for Students with ASD*, USDOE/IES

**James Bovaird**, *Exercise/Taxane-Induced Neuropathy*, UNL/UNMC Collaboration

**Susan Churchill**, *Exploratory Evaluation of Teacher Use of an Outdoor Classroom as an Instructional Resource and Impacts on Children*, Spencer Foundation

**James Bovaird and Leslie Shaw**, *Extend Utility of Value-Added Model*, NSF

**Susan Sheridan, Carolyn Pope Edwards, Lisa Knoche, James Bovaird and Christine Marvin**, *Parent Engagement and Partnership for Preschoolers at Risk*, NIH

**Brandy Clark, Gina Kunz and Susan Sheridan**, *Leadership Specialization in Rural CBC and Pediatric School Psychology*, USDOE/OSERS

**Christine Marvin**, *Nebraska Early Development Network Professional Upgrade*, NE Department of Education

**Yan Xia**, *Roy Scrivner Memorial Research Grant*, APA

**Edward Daly III, Merliee McCurdy, Tanya Ihlo and Gina Kunz**, *School Psychology Leadership Specialization in Response-to-Intervention Research and Systems Change*, USDOE/OSERS

**J. Ron Nelson**, *The E2 Strategy: Enhancing Effortful Engagement During Tier 2 Instruction*, USDOE/IES

**Allison Osborn**, *The Relationship between High-Quality Prekindergarten Classroom Environment and Literacy Outcomes for Students Learning English as a Second Language*, Society for Research in Child Development

## Grants Funded (July-Dec. 2010)

**Lisa Knoche and Brandy Clarke**, *E\*CITE Training*, Lincoln Public Schools

**Malinda Eccarius**, *Mountain Prairie Upgrade Partnership-Itinerant (MPUP-I)*, USDOE/OSERS

**Lisa Knoche and Sandra Potter**, *Parental Literacy Belief and Engagement in Homes of Dual Language Learners: A Mixed Methods Study*, ACF

## Congratulations to the following Faculty Affiliates:

**John DeFrain** received the 2010 North Central Regional Award for Excellence in Extension.

**Jody Isernhagen** received the Al Kilgore Award from the Nebraska Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

The following faculty received 2010 Employee Service Awards: **Ian Newman** (40 years of service); **John DeFrain** (35 years); **Julie Johnson** (30 years); **Ruth Heaton** (15 years); **Beth Doll** (10 years); **Marjorie Kostelnik** (10 years); **Margaret Latta** (10 years); **Michael Scheel** (10 years); **David DiLillo** (10 years); **James Bovaird** (5 years); **Maria Rosario de Guzman** (5 years); **Edmund Hamann** (5 years); **Cody Hollist** (5 years); **Henry Raikes** (5 years); **Kimberly Andrews Espy** (5 years).

**Jon Pedersen** was named president-elect of the Nebraska Area Teachers of Science and to the executive board of the Nebraska Academy of Science.

**Julie Johnson** received the Floyd S. Oldt Boss of the Year Award.

**Jim Lewis** was named the 2010 Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching Nebraska Professor of the Year.

**Natalie Koziol** received the 2010-2011 Folsom Distinguished Master's Thesis Award.

**Soo-Young Hong** was one of 15 UNL faculty selected for the 2011 Research Development Fellows Program.

## Research Spotlight **Victoria Molfese**



An internationally recognized researcher in early cognitive development has joined the ranks of CYFS faculty affiliates.

Dr. Victoria (Tori) Molfese, who arrived at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln from the University of Louisville in October, has been appointed as a Chancellor's Professor in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies.

Molfese's primary research has investigated the assessment of infants'

and children's cognitive skills; the use of behavioral and brain techniques to evaluate learning among preschool and school-aged children; and the impacts of classroom, teacher and student characteristics on children's intelligence and achievement test performance. Her work has also examined the identification and prediction of emergent literacy and math skills in preschool children, along with the influences of sleep habits, health and behavior on early learning.

Molfese is currently researching the effectiveness of early interventions for enhancing math skills among high-risk preschool children. She is also exploring the relationship between early reading and math abilities, as well as the role of preschool teacher-student interactions in cognitive development.

Over the course of a nearly 40-year academic career, Molfese has published dozens of journal articles, books and book chapters. Her research has been funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Education,

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, NASA, the Kellogg Foundation, and the March of Dimes. Molfese is a fellow of the American Psychological Society and the American Educational Research Association, and she has received the Award for Excellence in Research from the American Mensa Education and Research Foundation. She has also served as associate editor of the journal *Developmental Neuropsychology* since 1998.

*CYFS proudly welcomes Dr. Molfese to a growing body of researchers working toward the improvement of early education and development.*

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# MAKING A DIFFERENCE...

## By Charting the Landscape of Early Childhood Coaching



For many Nebraskans, the word “coaching” is synonymous with revered football figures such as Tom Osborne and Bob Devaney. For CYFS faculty affiliate Lisa Knoche, it’s vital to the future of Nebraska’s early childhood education.

Knoche is leading a newly funded one-year evaluation of the Early Childhood Coaching Project (ECCP). Developed by the Nebraska Department of Education,

the ECCP recently began training early childhood professionals who work with teachers and parents to improve young children’s development.

With the assistance of CYFS consultant Sue Bainter, Knoche is focused on determining the extent to which these early childhood professionals adhere to the coaching practices and strategies on which they receive training. In addition to considering which factors might affect adherence, the evaluation will examine whether current coaching models meet the needs and expectations of childhood professionals, teachers and parents.

Knoche noted that the project, which is funded by the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, is a “springboard effort” to explore the many uncharted dynamics of early childhood coaching.

“In some ways, it’s sort of a black hole: It’s unclear what happens in a lot of coaching relationships,” Knoche said. “[This project] is

not really about holding people accountable; it’s more about understanding what they are doing so that we can continue to provide them the support that they need and adjust the actual coaching protocol to effect change.”

Along with surveying coaches, teachers and parents about their training experiences, Knoche’s project will analyze videotaped coaching sessions to determine childhood professionals’ adherence to established coaching protocols. Knoche is optimistic that these collective efforts will eventually shine needed light on how coaching can influence early education settings and children’s developmental outcomes.

“I hope that, at the end of the day, we have information that’s useful ... to both coaches and the agencies or programs that are supporting coaches.”