

Virginia DEClares

Fall 2008

VA DEC Web Site: <http://www.soe.vcu.edu/vadec/>



DEC– Who We Are

The Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is a national, non-profit organization of individuals who work with or on behalf of children with special needs, birth through age eight, and their families. Founded in 1973, DEC is dedicated to promoting policies and practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of children. Children with special needs are those who have disabilities, developmental delays, are gifted/talented or are at risk of future developmental problems. Additional information about DEC is available at www.dec-sped.org.

VA DEC 2008-2009 Officers

President:

Belinda Hooper (bbhooper@vcu.edu)

President-Elect: Yaoying Xu (yxu2@vcu.edu)

Vice President: Lisa Brightwell (lisalilbit@yahoo.com)

Past President:

Linda Bradford (lbradford@mcvh-vcu.edu)

Secretary:

Pam Scates (kpscates@rivnet.net)

Treasurer &**Children's Advocacy Network:**

Linda Ingleson (LIngleso@odu.edu)

Membership:

Jaye Harvey (jharvey@rcps.info)

Exceptional Children's Week:

Selina Flores (selinaf@vt.edu)

Newsletter:

Mary Voorhees (mmv5r@virginia.edu)

Webmaster: Carole Ivey (civey@vcu.edu)

Fundraising:

Krista Eaton (krista2pins@comcast.net)

Nancy Fallen Award:

Elaine Barker (Elaine.Barker@acps.k12.va.us)

Student Representative: Abigail Vo (klassai@vcu.edu)

President's Message

Dear VA DEC Members and Friends:

Change is in the air! I'm not just talking about the presidential race, although there's no denying the excitement surrounding this election. I'm referring to the changes you will find in this issue of the VA DEC newsletter! In addition to the usual updates and resources of interest, a new section, "Teacher Tips" has been added. This issue is focused on early language and literacy development and features articles on teaching young English language learners and enhancing preschoolers' print knowledge.

Next, check out the new VA DEC website! Thank you Carole, for bringing our website into the 21st century with a new look. This is a work in progress so continue to let Carole know what information will be most helpful to you.

Join me in welcoming Lisa Brightwell as our new vice-president. Lisa is an ECSE teacher at Prince Edward Elementary in Farmville and brings her strong practitioner expertise to the board!

And finally, a reminder to go to the polls on Tuesday, November 4th! Regardless of how you plan to vote, be sure to exercise your freedom and make your voice heard!



Belinda Hooper, VA DEC President

DEC Membership

We would like to send a special invitation to teachers and other practitioners who provide direct services to children and families to join our organization. As Belinda noted in the President's message, we have added a *Teacher Tips* section to the newsletter that is designed to provide practical information. We will focus on a different topic in each newsletter. For membership information go to: <http://www.dec-sped.org/joindectoday.html>

Virginia DEC Website

Changes are coming to the Virginia DEC website. It is being updated with a new look and up-to-date information. Go to: <http://www.soe.vcu.edu/vadec/> to see the new format and the type of information that will be on the site soon. If there is any particular information that you would like to see included on the website, please contact Carole Ivey at civey@vcu.edu.

Mark Your Calendars

The 2008 NAEYC Annual Conference and Expo will be in Dallas from November 5-8, 2008. The conference focuses on everyday issues related to working with young children and families. A special feature at the conference this year will be the provision of "experts" to answer questions related to working with children with disabilities. For more information and to register go to: <http://www.annualconference.naeyc.org/>

The Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders 12th Annual Conference will be held on November 7-9, 2008 at the Hilton Mclean Tyson's Corner, Virginia. Morning plenary panels will be followed by afternoon seminars that continue and expand on the topics introduced in the plenary sessions. The conference will feature a presentation on Autism & Disorders of Relating & Communicating featuring Stanley Greenspan, M.D., Serena Wieder, Ph.D., Ricki Robinson, M.D., and a group of distinguished faculty presenting the latest information on Autism Spectrum Disorders. Conference materials are available at www.icdl.com.

Virginia's Seventh Annual Creating Connections Conference is scheduled for April 29th and 30th at the Hotel Roanoke. This conference is designed for

those who work in early intervention in Virginia. As additional information becomes available about the conference it will be posted on the Infant and Toddler Connection website at <http://www.infantva.org/>.

Shining Stars: Charting the Future for Today's Children. Virginia's Early Childhood Conference is scheduled for July 13, 14, 15, 2009 in Virginia Beach. Registration and session information will be posted at <http://ttaconline.org> as it becomes available.

State Updates

National Professional Development Center on Inclusion and Special Quest Grants

Governor Kaine recently created the Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) to coordinate a seamless continuum of services and expand access to high quality education for young children (birth to age 5) and their families, particularly those who are at-risk. Under the direction of Kathy Glazer, Virginia is developing a statewide early childhood education system that is coordinated, accountable, and supported by a high quality workforce. Two recently awarded grants, the Special Quest Birth-Five: Head Start/Hilton Foundation Training Program and National Professional Development Center on Inclusion (NPDCI) are collaboratively providing long term technical assistance to Virginia to support their efforts in promoting the inclusion of young children with disabilities in early childhood programs through the use of evidence-based practices and in the development of a statewide professional development plan for early childhood professionals. To learn more go to <http://community.fpg.unc.edu/npdci> and <http://www.specialquest.org/>

Virginia's Special Education Regulations

Numerous comments were provided by parents, professionals, and state organizations (including Virginia DEC) about the draft special education regulations. Many thanks to Linda Bradford, Belinda Hooper and Yaoying Xu for submitting the VA DEC comments.

Due to these advocacy efforts, proposed rule changes that would have limited parental consent for ending special education services and moved the due process hearings from the Virginia Supreme Court to the Department of Education were eliminated.

The Board of Education approved the final draft of the proposed *Special Education Regulations* at the

Sept. 25th Board meeting. The Board accepted some additional changes, adopted revisions and authorized the Virginia DOE staff to proceed with the steps needed to finalize the regulations. The DOE will notify school divisions when the regulations go into effect. For more information go to:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/dueproc/regulation_sCWD.html

Communities of Practice in Autism (CoPA)

The Communities of Practice in Autism (CoPA) project, a collaborative effort by the Integrated Training Collaborative, the Infant and Toddler Connection of Virginia and the Virginia DOE early childhood and autism projects is seeking regional leaders. The mission of CoPA is to share knowledge and information about evidence-based strategies in natural environments, focusing on infants, toddlers, and young children diagnosed or suspected of having Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and their families. The goal of CoPA is to enhance supports and services in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Additional information and applications can be found at:

<http://www.infantva.org/documents/CoPa-LeaderApplications.pdf>

Part C Lead Agency Change

On June 30, 2008, Commissioner James Reinhard of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) announced that the state lead agency for Part C will shift from DMHMRSAS to the Department of Health (VDH). This change is based on Governor Kaine's goal to coordinate all early childhood programs under one Office of Early Childhood Development. The new Office of Early Childhood Development will interface directly with the Departments of Education and Social Services, with a liaison to VDH linking the coordination of early childhood programs in that agency to the new office. The implementation of this lead agency change is scheduled for July 1, 2009.

Resources of Interest

Inclusive Placement Opportunities for Preschoolers (IPOP) Manual

The IPOP manual was developed by the Virginia Department of Education and the state system of Training and Technical Assistance Centers to help

local school divisions meet federal and state mandates that children with disabilities be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The manual contains 9 modules which provide critical information for understanding, building, supporting, and sustaining inclusive placement opportunities for young children with disabilities in community-based early childhood programs.

The manual is now available online at <http://taconline.org>. Once you sign in, go to the resources page and look in the new item's list.

The Center for Early Literacy Learning has published 70 new practice guides on their website at: www.earlyliteracylearning.org.

These practice guides were prepared to help practitioners and parents promote the early and emergent literacy skills of young children with disabilities or delays. The practice guides are organized by the child age and the type of literacy skill. There are 31 infant, 22 toddler, and 17 preschool practice guides that can be printed and used by parents or practitioners.

For additional information, contact the Center for Early Literacy Learning, Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute, 828-255-0470.

Teacher Tips

This new section of the newsletter provides practical information and tips for teachers or other practitioners working with young children with disabilities. The theme this month is early language and literacy development. Many thanks to Yaoying Xu and Sonia Cabell for writing for this newsletter!

Teaching Young English Language Learners Early Literacy Skills through Visual Arts

Dr. Yaoying Xu, Department of Special Education and Disability Policy, School of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University

One of the myths about second language learning is that preschool-aged children can learn a second language without much effort or systematic teaching as long as they are exposed to and surrounded by English. However, becoming proficient in a language is a complex and demanding process that

takes time and significant intellectual effort. Even the youngest learners do not simply “pick up” the language. For example, there are two levels of language proficiency: basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). It may take 2 to 5 years to become conversationally fluent and 4 to 7 years to become fluent in more technical, academic language. The rate of language acquisition varies with internal factors such as a child’s characteristics and external factors such as learning environment.

A child can learn two languages simultaneously or sequentially (McLaughlin, 1984; McLaughlin et al., 1995). Simultaneous learning typically occurs before three years of age when the development of two languages is similar to how monolingual children acquire language. Sequential language learning occurs after three years of age when the basics of the child’s first language have been developed or learned. During this period of time the second language acquisition follows a different progression and involves intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental factors. Tabors and Snow (1994) divided this sequence of development into four stages: home language use, nonverbal period, telegraphic and formulaic speech, and productive language.

Preschool-aged English language learners may experience some or all of these stages.

One effective strategy for teaching early literacy skills to young English language learners is through visual arts. Visual arts are another language for English language learners to use while they are acquiring English. Visual arts can be taught and experienced across curriculum areas, materials, formats, and settings. Related language and vocabulary can be weaved into the context of the lessons. More importantly, this is appropriate for all children with different developmental abilities and individual needs, in addition to facilitating the language development of English language learners. Children are naturally curious and intrinsically motivated to explore their environment and learn anything new. Through art activities children experience incredible individuality and uniqueness. Everybody has an opportunity to produce a “masterpiece” because it is unique to him/herself. They also have the chance to interact with others with multiple media of communication.

Visual arts are a natural way to facilitate language learning. Children become involved in personal creative experiences and are eager to share their

works with others. Art products stimulate children to use words as well as images to express their excitement about what they have created. Through their two-dimensional or three-dimensional art products with oral sharing, they acquire vocabulary and language naturally. This sharing of creativity and perception can lead to higher level of cognitive development such as concept formation and comprehension.

Doing arts also helps increase children’s confidence and self-esteem. For young English language learners, the time to do arts gives them a respite from the difficult work of focusing on acquiring their new language. The fun and creative activity itself gives them a break and a time to recharge (Dragan 2005). They can be active partners in an art project with their unique contribution. When this happens, their vocabulary in English has increased and they move successfully from nonverbal period to telegraphic speech and to productive language.

Learning language and literacy skills through arts can take many forms. To provide variety of learning experiences, Dragan (2005) suggested the following list of lessons demonstrating different reasons for teaching arts:

- How-to lessons on using specific materials (e.g., glue, scissors);
- How-to lessons to teach specific skills (e.g., to tear paper, make rubbings, do crayon resist);
- Lessons on learning to use specific media (e.g., block printing, watercolor paints, and plaster of Paris);
- Lessons connecting with cultural themes (e.g., *Papel picado*—cut-paper Mexican banners, Mexican bark paintings, Italian *impasto* paintings, Russian fairy tale boxes, Kwanzaa weavings, Chinese New Year dragons, Black History Month portraits);
- Lessons on holidays and seasons (e.g., leaf prints, scarecrows, pumpkins, elves and Santa, snowmen, spring flowers, Mother’s Day gifts, Fourth of July projects);
- Lessons linking to other curriculum (e.g., music, dance, drama, math, social studies, science, children’s literature);
- Lessons about art history or periods, specific artists, or art movements.

Dragan, P. B. (2005). *A how-to guide for teaching English language learners in the primary classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

McLaughlin, B. (1984). *Second language acquisition in childhood: Preschool children*. Vol. 1.1 Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

McLaughlin, D., Blanchard, A., & Osani, Y. (1995). *Assessing language development in bilingual preschool children*. Washington DC: George Washington University, The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

Tabors, P. & Snow, C. (1994). English as a second language in preschools. In F. Genesee (Ed.), *Educating second language children: The whole child, the whole curriculum, the whole community* (pp. 103-125). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Enhancing Preschoolers' Print Knowledge through Shared Storybook Reading

*Sonia Q. Cabell, Research Staff
Preschool Language and Literacy Lab, Center for the Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning,
University of Virginia*

Sharing books with young children is touted as one of the most important activities in which adults can engage. Indeed, storybook reading is undoubtedly a key part of every preschool classroom. However, simply reading books aloud to preschoolers may not be enough to develop their emerging abilities. Rather, there are key techniques that teachers can use during storybook reading to deliberately foster children's emergent literacy skills—skills which lay a foundation for later fluent reading (Cabell, Justice, Vukelich, Buell, & Han, 2008; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998). One such technique, *print referencing*, has been shown to significantly enhance children's print knowledge (Justice & Ezell, 2002; Justice, Kaderavek, Fan, Sofka, & Hunt, in press; Lovelace & Stewart, 2007).

The term *print knowledge* refers to children's understanding of how print works in a book. It includes print concepts (e.g., print carries meaning, directionality, book organization) and alphabet knowledge (i.e., familiarity with the shapes and names of alphabet letters). Print knowledge is an important predictor of later reading ability, laying a

foundation for children to eventually "break the code" (National Early Literacy Panel, 2004). By simply incorporating print references, or talking about the print during shared storybook reading, teachers can draw children's attention to the forms and functions of print (McGinty, Sofka, Sutton, & Justice, 2006).

Adults often believe that they already talk about print while reading; however, research has shown that this is done very infrequently (Ezell & Justice, 2000). In addition, studies show that preschool children pay very little attention to print when a book is read aloud and focus their gaze primarily on pictures (Evans, Williams, & Pursoo, 2008; Justice, Pullen, & Pence, 2008). When their attention is deliberately drawn to the print through print referencing techniques, children's print concept knowledge and alphabet knowledge are significantly improved (Justice & Ezell, 2002; Justice et al., in press). Further, these techniques are relatively simple and are readily learned by teachers with little training.

During shared storybook reading, teachers can embed references to print concepts, letters, and words (see Justice & Ezell, 2004).

Examples of Print Referencing

Verbal Techniques

- Ask questions about print.
What is this letter?

What does this word say?
- Make comments about print.
This is the letter M, just like in the beginning of Melissa's name.

There are two words in the title. One.. two!
- Make requests.
Point to where I begin reading on this page.

Point to the word "stop."

Non Verbal Techniques

- Track the print with a finger.
- Point to letters and words.

For children with special needs, including those with language impairment, print referencing techniques that do not require children to verbally respond appear to be effective (Stewart & Lovelace, 2007).

In addition to non-verbal techniques and comments, a teacher can simply pose and answer a question:

Look at these two words (pointing): "big", "coconut." Which word is longer? Let's count how many letters are in each word. (Pointing to "big") One, two, three. (Pointing to "coconut") One, two, three, four, five, six, seven. "Coconut" has more letters than "big". It is a longer word.

For print referencing techniques to be effective, teachers must offer children many opportunities to learn. Repetition is essential, and print referencing can be easily integrated into daily readings. It is important to keep in mind, however, that print referencing should not detract from the overall book sharing experience. Rather, these techniques should complement current practices, enriching children's emergent literacy skills.

References

- Cabell, S. Q., Justice, L. M., Vukelich, C., Buell, M. J., & Han, M. (2008). Strategic and intentional shared storybook reading. In L.M. Justice & C. Vukelich (Eds.), *Achieving excellence in preschool literacy instruction* (pp. 198-220). New York: Guilford.
- Evans, M. A., Williamson, K., & Pursoo, T. (2008). Preschoolers' attention to print during shared book reading. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 12*, 106-129.
- Ezell, H. K., & Justice, L. M. (2000). Increasing the print focus of adult-child shared book reading through observational learning. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology, 9*, 36-47.
- Justice, L. M., & Ezell, H. K. (2004). Print referencing: An emergent literacy enhancement strategy and its clinical applications. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 35*, 185-193.
- Justice, L. M., Kaderavek, J., Fan, X., Sofka, A., & Hunt, A. (in press). Accelerating preschoolers' early literacy development through classroom-based teacher-child storybook reading and explicit print referencing. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*.
- Justice, L. M., Pullen, P. C., & Pence, K. (2008). Influence of verbal and nonverbal references to print on preschoolers' visual attention to print during storybook reading. *Developmental Psychology, 44*, 855-866.
- Lovelace, S., & Stewart, S. R. (2007). Increasing print awareness in preschoolers with language impairment using non-evocative print referencing. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 38*, 16-30.
- McGinty, A., Sofka, A., Sutton, M., & Justice, L. (2006). Fostering print awareness through interactive shared reading. In A. van Kleeck (Ed.), *Sharing books and stories to promote language and literacy* (pp. 77-120). San Diego, CA: Plural Publishing.
- National Early Literacy Panel. (2004, November). *The National Early Literacy Panel: A research synthesis on early literacy development*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists/SDE, Anaheim, CA.
- Whitehurst, G. J., & Lonigan, C. J. (1998). Child development and emergent literacy. *Child Development, 69*, 848-872.

Virginia ECSE Personnel Preparation News

Special Educators Entering a Diverse Society (SEEDS)

George Mason University Early Childhood Education faculty, Drs. Monimalika Day, Eva Thorp, Julie Kidd, and Susan Burns, have been awarded a U.S. Department of Education grant from 2007 to 2011 to provide tuition and stipend support for students pursuing their Master's degree and Virginia licensure in Early Childhood Special Education. The SEEDS program prepares individuals to provide quality programs and services for culturally and linguistically diverse young children with disabilities and their families.

Candidates from groups traditionally underrepresented in teaching, including parents of children with disabilities, are especially encouraged to apply. Students will be admitted as a cohort, and classes will be held on the Arlington campus.

Courses will be offered during evenings or weekends. Applications are under review, and interviews are being scheduled for Fall 2008 admission. To receive more information, please email earlyed@gmu.edu and inquire about the SEEDS fellowship.

Early and Responsive Learning Initiative (EARLI)

The University of Virginia has been awarded a U.S. Department of Education personnel preparation grant from Jan. 2009 to Jan. 2013 to provide tuition and stipends to students who are pursuing their Master's degree and Virginia licensure in Early Childhood Special Education. Drs. Tina Stanton-Chapman and Martha Snell are the principal investigators on the grant. Drs. Mary Voorhees and Sarah Hadden will serve as core faculty and/or advisory board members.

EARLI consists of a sequence of integrated coursework and practicum opportunities focused on the following training priorities: a) knowledge of child development and developmentally appropriate practice; b) use of appropriate assessment and teaching techniques with young children, including children with English as a second language; c) family-focused and culturally responsive services; d) collaborative skills required to work with families and professionals; e) inclusive service delivery models; and f) a strong focus on the specialized skills required to teach children with autism and low incidence intellectual and motor disabilities.

The EARLI program may be completed as a two-year Master's degree program for students who already hold a Bachelor's degree in a related field or as a five-year BA/MT program that includes undergraduate studies in psychology and graduate work in ECSE. Grant funding is available for up to students twelve students each year. For more information email Dr. Tina Stanton-Chapman at stantonchapman@virginia.edu.

Nancy Fallen Award Nominations

The VA DEC is currently accepting nominations for the Nancy Fallen award for 2008/2009. Requirements for being considered for the award include:

- The nominee must be a current member of the Virginia DEC
- The nominee must be a professional currently involved with programs for young children with special needs, ages birth to five. She or he must have current or past direct service experience
- The nominee's name, address, telephone number, and a brief description (less than 50 words) of his or her early childhood background must be submitted to the selection committee.

Submit nominations by May 15, 2008 to Elaine Barker, 415 N. Kenmore St., Arlington, VA 22201-1725.

Treasurer's Report

VADEC has a balance of \$5,549.27 in its account. We will be spending \$500 to support the VADEC president to attend the national DEC conference.