RISE 2011 CONFERENCE
Research in Special Education

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: STATE OF THE NATION

Flinders University Victoria Square Campus, 182 Victoria Square (the old Reserve Bank Building)

Friday November 11th

Featuring:

Keynote presentation by ACARA Project Officer, Special Education Margaret Lynch:

“EASING THE TENSION – THE AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY”

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Margaret Lynch
Title
Easing the Tension – The Australian Curriculum and Students with Disability
Abstract
Tensions have existed in all areas of education for some time. These include the pursuit of academic excellence and inclusion of all learners, devolution and centralised decision-making, choice and mandated curriculum, and accountability criteria such as standards and high-stakes testing, and personalisation of learning. Tensions in the special education field might be seen as a microcosm of the wider education policy arena as the perspectives of different interests and agendas are played out. Education systems are guided by policies to raise standards on the one hand, and by policies to promote inclusion on the other hand. The tensions are possibly nowhere more evident than in the development of an Australian Curriculum for all young Australians. This presentation will explore the tensions and competing agendas that have to be considered in making this a reality. The journey travelled so far will be discussed and the opportunities to ease the tension that arise from special educators embracing and engaging with this national education initiative will be discussed.

Biography
Margaret is currently Senior Project Officer: Special Education at the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) in Sydney. Prior to this she worked in South Australia for the Department of Education and Children’s Services. Margaret has worked in the Special Education field for nearly 30 years and has had a number of roles in that time. These roles have included as a teacher and leader in a variety of schools, in support roles across regions, and system level special education leadership.

She has broad experience in policy and curriculum development, and supporting children and students with disabilities and learning difficulties, their parents/caregivers; and preschool, school and support agency personnel in a range of settings.

Louise Williams
Title
The Power of Peers – Raising Awareness of the Autism Spectrum
Abstract
The peer awareness program has been written by Autism SA for use in schools and targets four cohorts of students:
- 5 – 6 year olds; 7–9 year olds; 10–12 year olds; 13 – 17 year olds
The program consists of a Powerpoint presentation and accompanying notes for teachers to deliver to their class, or groups of students about Autism Spectrum Disorder. The rationale for developing the program was to provide classroom teachers with a resource that was easy to use and ultimately provide positive information to students about Autism Spectrum Disorder and to improve the social environment for students on the spectrum. The program was produced for DECS schools in 2010 for use in governing schools. It is to be rolled out to the Catholic and Independent sector schools in 2012 as part of a research project to establish the evidence of effectiveness on peer attitudes to inclusion.

Biography
Louise Williams is an Inclusion Consultant with the School Inclusion Program, Autism SA. She has previously worked as a teacher in remote and isolated areas, in Special Education and as a teacher in Special Class. Louise brings a wealth of expertise and knowledge to her Consultant role with schools across all three educational sectors.

Louise wrote The Power of Peers – raising awareness of the Autism Spectrum, after delivering peer awareness programs in schools and working with school communities.

Elizabeth Andrew
Title
Compass Literacy and Numeracy Assessment
Abstract
This session will draw on research conducted by COMPASS is an online literacy and numeracy assessment specifically designed for adolescents and young adults who have had limited or disrupted exposure to formal education, including experience in testing. Compass was developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) under the direction of DECS ICAN with the key goal of offering a flexible, meaningful assessment of student ability in literacy and numeracy. The tests are designed to assess skills in Mathematics and Reading.

Biography
Elizabeth, as Manager - ICAN Learning Projects, was responsible for the design and implementation of COMPASS through the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) for DECS. Elizabeth has many years of experience as an educator in mainstream and special schools in DECS and the independent system. Over the last few years she has worked in DECS Disability Services in the Learning Difficulties Team, responding to the needs of students, parents, educators and community personnel in supporting personalised and differentiated approaches to learning. Presently Elizabeth is managing a National Australian E-learning Pilot Project – Notschool in a collaborative partnership between DECS, Education Services Australia and Campbell Page Education Services Australia and Campbell Page
(a not for profit non government organisation). She has a Masters Degree in Educational Computing – Specialisation Literacy and is currently completing her PhD in student metacognition while using technology.

John Barker
Title
Response to Intervention: Coming to a School near You?
Abstract
The Response to Intervention (RTI) model of support for students was introduced into the USA several years ago. At the time it represented a significant change in philosophy and practice in the area of special education and its ongoing implementation has continued to provoke debate. While South Australian schools and systems do not adhere to an RTI approach there are similarities between practice here and RTI as used in the USA. This presentation will look at the current state of play with RTI in the USA and to what extent that debate might inform practice in South Australia.

Biography
John is currently a School Psychologist at Pembroke School. Between 2004 and 2008 he was the Special Educational Needs Advisor for the English Schools Foundation in Hong Kong and between 2001 and 2004 was Principal of Modbury South Primary School. He worked for the SA Education Department for 20 years as a teacher, Guidance Officer, advisor and school leader. He has worked both in Hong Kong and Scotland.

Greg Carey
Title
Game2WORK
Abstract
Game2WORK investigates the factors that make workers with an intellectual disability have an active interest in the pursuit of employment and be game to work. The three aspects of social capital identified by Woolcock (1998, 2001), adapted for the workplace, were used to examine the attributes important for being successful in the workplace:

- Bonding - establishing relationships with people who have similar roles.
- Linking - establishing relationships with people in power or authority.
- Bridging - establishing relationships with people in different roles or situations.

Unlike their non-disabled peers, employment outcomes for people with a disability do not follow economic trends, rather, research indicates, they have remained similar in all developed countries, and in all economic conditions. Similarly employment outcomes show consistently comparable trends: Most are in low skilled positions, are unemployed or underemployed with low wages and little opportunity for advancement, they found employment through their family and social network and have little opportunity for further education and training (Ford, 2003). However, in all cases the option of paid or voluntary work is a key factor in providing self-worth and developing positive self-esteem for the individual. It provides a sense of place and value within the Western community structure, and becomes a vital factor in improving the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities.

Biography
Greg is a teacher of students with disabilities and an Adjunct Lecturer in the School of Education at Flinders University, South Australia. His research concentrates on the position of those with an intellectual disability in the Digital Education Revolution and the value of emerging technologies to this group. He has a long-standing interest in the transition of students with intellectual disabilities from school to work and the development of special education services in developing countries.

Katherine Dix
Title
Student Mental Health, Disability, and KidsMatter
Abstract
This presentation draws key findings from three nation-wide, federally funded, research projects conducted in Australia over the last six years. It brings together data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, the KidsMatter Primary for Students with a Disability, which was a side-project of the KidsMatter Primary Evaluation, and preliminary data from the KidsMatter Early Childhood Evaluation. In all three projects, children’s disability status was collected, along with parent/caregiver assessment of children’s mental health as being ‘normal’, ‘borderline’, or ‘abnormal’ according to the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire. Differences in mental health status due to age and extent of disability, touching on the notion of co-morbidity, are considered. It raises issues around better supporting students with a disability and of the potential for whole-school mental health promotion initiatives, such as KidsMatter, to provide new opportunities to better support all young children and students with disabilities, whether identified or unrecognised.

Biography
Katherine is a researcher in the Flinders Centre for Student Wellbeing and Prevention of Violence. She project managed and was chief analyst of the KidsMatter Primary and Early Childhood evaluations and is currently Senior Researcher & Data Manager at Principals Australia.
Erica Handley
Linda Hale
Title
Asperger syndrome: a Model for Keeping Students with Complex and Challenging Needs in their Local School
Abstract
The complex and challenging needs of some students with Asperger syndrome can put their inclusion in mainstream settings at risk. In this presentation we seek to answer the question “How can we create the conditions for best practice interventions for students with Asperger syndrome in mainstream schools?” We discuss key aspects of a successful model of support developed over six years through collaborative partnerships with families, schools, Autism SA, service providers and DECS.
Biography
Erica is a Consultant Teacher at Autism SA. She is currently seconded to a DECS Regional Office providing targeted support for students with complex and challenging behaviour. She presented a paper at the 2007 Biennial Australian Conference on ASD and co-presented this paper at the 2011 Asian Pacific Autism Conference in Perth. In 2009 Erica was a member of the AAETC’s South Australian Regional Education and Training Team.
Linda is a Manager for Curriculum Innovation and Support in DECS Special Education. Prior to her current role Linda worked closely with Erica Handley as a Disability Coordinator in the Southern Adelaide Region supporting the inclusion of students with ASD and complex needs in mainstream schools.

Jane Jarvis
Title
Understanding Differentiation in General Education Classrooms
Abstract
Differentiation is a term that is used variously in both special education and general education, and sometimes in ways that reflect misunderstandings. What does it really mean to differentiate effectively for the full range of learners in diverse, general education classrooms? Where does special education fit in with differentiation? This session will draw on current research to explore the key principles and practices that represent effective differentiation. A key focus will be on common misunderstandings about differentiation and how teachers might be supported to address these. Early findings from local research into beginning teachers’ understandings of differentiation will also be shared.
Biography
Jane is a Senior Lecturer in special education at Flinders University, and has previously worked in a range of teaching and specialist roles in special education, gifted education and disability services in Australia and the United States. Jane currently works with schools in Australia and overseas on differentiating curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners and has research and teaching interests in differentiation and inclusive practices, gifted education, and students with learning difficulties.

Merel Purmer
Title
Video-based Interventions in Social Development Group Settings: A new Model and Research Outcomes
Abstract
The Telstra Foundation iModeling™ Project is a social development project funded by the Telstra Foundation over three years since 2009, and run by Autism SA in Adelaide, South Australia. The iModeling™ Project runs four social development groups each year for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders aged 8-15, including one group for children with autism and an intellectual disability. The aim of the project is to use video based interventions and information technologies to teach socio-communicative skills and self-protective behaviours in a group setting, with a focus on improved retention and generalization of learned skills over time.
Biography
Merel has been working as a Developmental Educator for the School Inclusion Program at Autism SA in Adelaide, South Australia since 2007 and as an Autism Spectrum Disorder Consultant since 2010. Merel is the Project Leader for the Telstra Foundation iModeling Project from its start in 2009 and currently working full time in the iModeling Project.

Phillip Read
Title
Sensory Impairment: Support at Key Life Stages
Abstract
This research project is the first stage of a three stage collaborative project which aims to investigate the support needs, at key life stages and across transition points, of children and young adults with a sensory impairment. This study is located directly in the complex and vital world of the participants. Data collected through semi-structured interview methodology have been analysed to map and describe themes and commonalities which emerged from client, parent and support workers’ perceptions. It also identified the strengths and areas needing to be addressed in the provision of services by one Non-Government Organisation in Australia. The findings will make a significant contribution to the literature on client support needs in Not-for-profit organisations for children and youths with
sensory impairment. In addition it adds to the very limited body of knowledge on how these organisations should position themselves in order to avoid the inefficiencies which may be associated with highly reactive service provision. Importantly this project is focused directly on the agenda of an important community organization, an agenda that is attempting to develop and evaluate the effectiveness of practical procedures that bring health, education and community service provision together. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this project will contribute to academia in the field of sensory impairment as well as providing other Community Service organizations with valuable planning information.

Biography
Phil has worked in the South Australian education sector for nearly 40 years with extensive teaching, advisory and project officer experience in mainstream primary and special education (vision impairment, technology, materials production and learning difficulties). He has most recently taught at Flinders University and the South Australian School for Vision Impaired. In the last two years, he has been the Research and Evaluation Officer for CanDo4Kids in South Australia, implementing and evaluating Goal Attainment Scaling as a measure of that organisation’s service outcomes.

Peter Walker
Title
Over the Fence – Parent Partnerships in a Special School Context
Abstract
The foundation of a child’s education is built on the partnership between schools and families. This partnership can be challenging for special schools, however, when communicating with a parent community often geographically divided and socially isolated. The presentation recounts my recent experience as a Principal of a special school in New South Wales and its relation to the field of current research on education and community.

Biography
Peter has worked in diverse Special Education settings throughout both South Australia and New South Wales for twenty years. Over the last decade Peter has been in school leadership positions, initially as an Assistant Principal, then as a Principal from 2006 to 2011. This year Peter returned to South Australia where he is now a Lecturer in Special Education at Flinders University.

Registration closes on 31 October 2011
Registration Fee: $80.00
Full-time Student Registration Fee: $15.00
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