



2008-2009 Annual Report

Highlights this year

- Our research team analyzes inclusion scales data from 589 classrooms in 287 centres across Canada
- Sharon Irwin receives Doctor of Laws from UW, June 1 2008
- 200 delegates attend SpeciaLink Symposium in Winnipeg
- Resource Centre regularly welcomes community members, from as far away as Germany!
- SpeciaLink presents 1/2 day session at DEC's International Conference
- Work continues on Inclusion Scales revisions & validation
- 10 distinct Workshops, seminars, full day trainings all across Canada along with numerous talks to student groups, childcare staff meetings, etc.
- Quarterly e-bulletins broadcast to members

Inside this report:

| | |
|---|---|
| SL on line | 2 |
| Membership update | |
| Canadian Council on Learning project update | |
| Inclusion Training and support | 3 |
| Honorary degree | 4 |
| Strategic Planning | |
| Funders & Supporters | |
| Inclusion Symposium | 5 |
| Board of Directors | |
| Chairperson's Report | 6 |
| Director's Report | |
| Financials | 7 |
| More about us | 8 |





SpecialLink on Line!

Thanks to **Sandy Tolman** Office Assistant, University of Winnipeg's Faculty of Education Access Program who has so capably acted as our web guru this past year, juggling electronic files and her new baby, Samantha with calm and commitment. We appreciate you Sandy!

We also appreciate the generosity of the **University of Winnipeg** which now hosts SpecialLink's website as a service in kind.

SpecialLink thanks Staff and Consultants

Debra Mayer, Director
Sharon Irwin, Senior Researcher and Trainer
Lisa Maloney, Resource Centre
Cheryl Duffy, Symposium Registrar, Community Living Manitoba
Claire Funk, desk top publishing
Sandy Tolman, Webmaster, University of Winnipeg
Lynn Cooper, Strategic Planning
Ray Blumenfeld, We Communications, Symposium Sourcebook

*Children's Resource Services
 Region Of Halton - Social and Community Services*

I hope you know how connected I am – at least in my heart – to the children and adults with additional support needs.
*Anahita Aminian
 Red River College ECE Instructor,*

SpecialLink Membership Grows

This year, SpecialLink's membership hit 349 groups, organizations and individuals representing thousands of staff and families across Canada. Here is just a sample of comments from our members and supporters:

As an inclusive child development centre that honours and welcomes all children we continue to remain supportive.
*Debbie Milne Executive Director
 First Adventure Child Development Centres,*

Belleville Ont.
 I have been checking out your website (great stuff!) and have downloaded some articles. Keep up the great work! Peace,
*Sr. Joyce Lorentz
 Regina, SK*

I've been working in the field of ECE Inclusion since the '80's. It's been a fascinating journey....a chance to meet some wonderful people. So much has happened yet so much remains to be done.
Susan Hancock Supervisor,

Assessing Inclusion Quality in ELCC in Canada

-Canadian Council on Learning project update

Dr. Sharon Irwin and Dr. Donna Lero have been leading the work on the revisions and updates to our SpecialLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale our Inclusion Rating Scales and to the assessment of their reliability and validity. This included checking all data collected by different observers in different jurisdictions, investigating discrepancies, collecting information about the number of children with special needs in the room and in the centre. Relevant literature was reviewed, particularly on assessing the reliability and validity of the ECERS-R to inform analysis planning, and on Canadian and US studies that included any assessments of inclusion quality in child care programs.

Assessment of Reliability of each scale has been completed using inter-item analysis and Cronbach Alpha. Correlational and Factor Analyses were used to determine the extent to which the Principles and Practices are indeed separate scales; whether or not there are subscales or discrete clusters on items within either scale. Finally, analysis examined how scores relate to Directors' perceptions of centre effectiveness in providing inclusive child care in their community, the centre's inclusion history, and directors' perceptions of the strengths and challenges experienced in their centre in providing effective, inclusive child care.

The expanded version of the SpecialLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale (formerly known as the SpecialLink Inclusion Principles and Practices Scales) will be published in Summer, 2009. It will incorporate feedback from over 2500 people who were trained to use the SpecialLink Inclusion Scale all across Canada and the United States.

Fundamentally, the SpecialLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale works. Reporters found the concepts clear and were generally able to achieve inter-rater reliability at 85% or higher, acceptable for research purposes. Many provinces and regions now require periodic use of the Scales in their inclusive centres. In the expanded version (2009) many points of clarification have been added to increase precision in scoring, but that the items and indicators have not been changed.

Fundamentally, the SpecialLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale works.

The numbers:

- **589 classrooms in 287 centres**
- **Of the 589 observations, 267 were done in centres in which at least one child with special needs was known to be enrolled at that time**
- **Of the 589 observations, 320 (54.3%) were done in classrooms in which at least one child with special needs was present.**

Inclusion Training & Support

In this membership year, SpecialLink staff, board and associates offered a wide range of training about inclusion across Canada, in the USA and Israel. We appreciate the support and interest of training organizers!

First Provincial Aboriginal Infant Development Conference, Inclusion of Aboriginal Children with Special Needs and Their Families Chase, BC April 8-9, 2008 with Debra Mayer: Creating a Place for All Children

Building Inclusion Leadership co-sponsored by Partnerships for Inclusion-Nova Scotia and Early Intervention-Nova Scotia, for directors who have participated in the PFI-NS initiative over the past 5 years. April 18 and 19, 2008 with Dr. Sharon Hope Irwin, with PFI staff (Carolyn Webber, Elizabeth Hicks, Shannon Harrison, Margo Barrett and Elizabeth MacDonald).

Early Childhood Inclusion Workshop hosted by Children's Choice Co-op with Debra Mayer May 3, 2008 Prince Albert, SK

Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia (ECEBC) 37th

spring conference with Ruth Bancroft, SpecialLink Board Member: Put out the Welcome Mat: The Principles and Practices of Inclusion May 29-31, 2008

First Nation Day Care Directors Workshop. A Talk about Inclusion, with Debra Mayer October 24th, 2008 Scanterbury, Manitoba

Division for Early Childhood, Council for Exceptional Children's 24th Annual International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs and Their Families How to Measure Inclusion Quality—and Why with Debra Mayer and Dr. Sharon Hope Irwin October 30, 2008 Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Customized training for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Health and Community Services. A two-day training session titled Places for All Children – How to Measure Inclusion Quality in Child Care (and Why?) with Dr. Sharon Hope Irwin St. John's, Newfoundland Labrador. November 18th-19th, 2008

Customized training for Nova Scotia Department of Community Services Early Childhood Development Services. Policy & Program Development - Special training for Early

Childhood Development Officers with Debra Mayer November 27, 2008

Mount Saint Vincent University, Child and Youth Study, Nova Scotia Creating Places for All Children & Inclusion Visionaries, with Debra Mayer ; Sydney NS: October 4-6 2009; Halifax: November 28/29, 2009

Early Childhood Resource Services—ErinoakKids Customized Training for the trans-disciplinary team with Debra Mayer December 15/16, 2008 Brampton Ontario

Manitoba Education Research Network Early Learning Research Forum Creating Places for All Children: Measuring Inclusion Quality In Early Childhood Programs, with Debra Mayer January 16, 2009 Winnipeg Manitoba.

The MOFET Institute Inclusion in Canada with Debra Mayer for lecturers from various colleges of education and representatives of the Special Education Department in Israel's Ministry of Education. February 3, 2009 in Tel-Aviv, Israel.



Israelis learn about inclusion at the Mofet Institute



Dr. Sharon Hope Irwin receives honorary Doctor of Laws

Dr. Sharon Hope Irwin, a longtime champion for child care and the inclusion of children with special needs received an honorary doctorate from the University of Winnipeg, June 1, 2008. Sharon's Doctor of Laws was presented by Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, who Sharon knew well during his tenure as a federal politician and Minister responsible for child care. Skillfully, Sharon shaped her address to the class of 2008 to advocate for children with disabilities, their families, their early childhood caregivers and the ECE system, reminding the students that they would need childcare for their own kids one day, and that at least some of them would be parents of children with special needs.



Sharon and other award recipients were honoured at a very fancy dinner with the President. Sharon was joined at the Dinner by her Winnipeg fans, some of who are seen above.

Sharon was especially touched to receive a beautiful bouquet from the national child care movement to mark the special occasion. Congratulations Sharon!



"Genuine universal inclusive child care must become one of the pillars of the Canada we want — along with our commitment to democracy, our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and our traditions of peacekeeping."

Dr. Sharon Irwin,
Address to the Class
of 00, University of
Winnipeg

Board of directors holds Strategic Planning Session

On January 12, 2009 SpecialLink's board met in person and by conference call for our strategic planning session, facilitated by Lynn Cooper. Given the realities of our funding challenges our board agreed that over the next three years, our focus would be upon:

Board Governance: strengthened organizational administration, training and advocacy

Financial Viability: provincial focus, developing non-traditional links and partners

Community Outreach: valuing the wisdom, connecting, acting as a bridge, support

We will continue to offer inclusion training and will seek out private sponsors such as foundations and businesses. We will develop a pay-for-service schedule for both training and resources. Developing a new video that

highlights inclusion will be a key project which we will seek funding and partners to support.

We will establish partnerships and linkages with established organizations with shared goals. We will develop a multi-faceted approach to appeal to several organizations. Finally, we will renew our by-laws to better reflect our operating principles and priorities.

2008-09 funders and supporters-thank you for your support

Canadian Council on Learning

Province of Ontario

Province of Manitoba

Province of British Columbia

Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Manitoba Government Employees Union

Atkinson Foundation

The University of Guelph

The University of Winnipeg

Community Living Manitoba



Early Childhood Inclusion: Applying Lessons Learned National Symposium

In August 2008, SpecialLink was delighted to welcome 200+ delegates and presenters to our Symposium on Early Childhood Inclusion and Early Intervention at the University of Winnipeg. The breadth and depth of our presenters was impressive, and we were so fortunate that they were willing to exchange their lessons learned at this symposium. (Almost all powerpoints and a Sourcebook with executive summaries are posted to our website.)

We appreciate the support of our funders, the Canadian Council on Learning, the Provinces of Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia, and our labour supporters, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and the Manitoba Government and General Employees Union. The University of Winnipeg donated the space and all AV. Community Living Manitoba supported our registration. Together, this incredible support allowed us to keep registration

costs down and to even offer travel and registration subsidy to a number of participants from across the country.

Our transdisciplinary gathering of researchers, families and the practice communities was the first such national gathering since SpecialLink's last symposium 17 years ago! In its lead-up, participants helped to develop the themes and symposium agenda; and the subsequent writing of our sourcebook. Dozens of workshops, 3 fantastic keynotes, messages from politicians, a Made in Manitoba social, our AGM, tours of inclusive centres, and networking, networking, networking made the four days fly by. Evaluations were fantastic, and we hope to be able to do it again in two years.

But it would not have been possible without our wonderful committee!

BRAVO!

National planning committee

Vic Stone Winnipeg, MB
Denise Stone, Government of Nova Scotia
Claire Mclean, Government of Ontario
Marc Tardif, Sudbury, ON
Hubert Fenton-Smedts, Winnipeg, MB
Ruth Bancroft, Vancouver, BC
Margaret Burke, Glace Bay, NS
Karen Chrysler, Terrace, BC
Susan Spence, Ottawa, ON
Laurel Penney, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
Debra Mayer, Winnipeg MB

Brigitte Insull, Symposium photographer
Terry Bussey, Videographer

Local Planning Team

Hubert Fenton-Smedts
Donna Freeman
Linda Heron
Fernanda Hodgson
Wendy McKnight
Tracy Porhownik
Kerri Pruden
Lise Thiessen
Joanne Vinet

Read all about it in The National Post

Debra Mayer of SpecialLink and Dixie Mitchell of NBACL promote inclusive early learning and child care and its importance for long-term inclusion; some of the challenges we face and NBACL's work to address these. The article was part of an 8 page supplement sponsored by CACL (the Canadian Association for Community Living) in the National Post whose objectives were to highlight CACL's 10-year Agenda objectives. Inclusion: Making the most of life; National Post (2/18/09)

<http://www.nationalpost.com/related/links/story.html?id=1304748>

(don't forget to read the rest of the articles!)

Thanks to our 2008-09 board of directors

Winnipeg Executive

Vic Stone, Chair
Phil Baker, Vice Chair
Hubert Fenton-Smedts, Secretary
Reg Malanchuk, CMA Treasurer

National Members

Ruth Bancroft, Vancouver BC
Mary-Anne Bédard, Toronto ON
Dr. Donna Lero, Guelph ON
Margaret Burke, Glace Bay NS
Tracey Law, Fredericton, NB



Chairperson's report



Vic Stone, Chair SpecialLink (L.) thanks **Dan Hurley**, Senior Executive Officer and Advisor to the President, University of Winnipeg, at our symposium opening

Since 1990, our organization has built a solid base in the Canadian childcare community. SpecialLink, The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion, represents parents and professionals across this country who believe sound community planning for child care must originate with the people who live in the community. Over the years we've been involved in research, published books, put on workshops and conferences, established networks for parents and professionals, put out newsletters, done individual consultations and student training. We've also maintained a toll-free phone line and a website. SpecialLink has been in the Canadian forefront, advocating for mainstream child care that is inclusive, affordable, accessible, and comprehensive. We've done much work on child care inclusion, but much

remains to be done.

As you all know we are now challenged by the shrinking funding environment that is taking place in our country. As a result, while we continue to pursue new funding opportunities, our executive director's paid time is now at 25% FTE. And to stretch available dollars we have entered into partnered agreement with other organizations, such as Community Living Manitoba. I'd like to reassure our members that our purpose as a national organization will not change.

Our mission continues to be the promotion and encouragement of policies, practices and services that make it possible for children with disabilities to attend inclusive child care programs. I believe that the promotion of our organizational goals is even more important in

these hard recessionary times when supports to families are under severe stress.

I'd like to thank the executive committee and members of the Board for their dedication and hard work over the last year. We all appreciate that our national organization, with its broad representation from parents and professionals, plays a key role in the promotion/advocacy of inclusion for children with special needs.

On behalf of the Board I'd also like to express a deep appreciation to Debra Mayer, our Executive Director. Debra's vision, hard work and energy have kept this organization moving forward despite the considerable funding challenges in the present tough economic times.

And thank you to SpecialLink for according me the special privilege of serving as Chair for the second year.

Vic Stone

Director's Report



We are working for an inclusive Canada, beginning with the early years!
Debra Mayer, MA
Director

What a year! The SpecialLink Symposium was one huge "deliverable" this year and the ongoing work to complete the SpecialLink Inclusion Rating Scales revisions kept Donna and Sharon (our research team) busy reviewing hundreds of comments and scores contributed by inclusion supporters across Canada. Watch for the release of the revised scales and research report in 2009.

In addition to all the activities described elsewhere in this annual report, SpecialLink's point of view is well captured through our contribution to **Beyond Child's Play: Caring for and educating young children in Canada Our Schools/ Our Selves**, Spring 2009 (vol. 18, no. 3, #95) published by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Ottawa.

SpecialLink was part of a consultation hosted by the Centre for Excellence in Children's Well Being, Children and Adolescents

with Special Needs which led to the publication of **A Training Curriculum for Early Childhood Educators in the Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities Program Working with Aboriginal Children with Special Needs**.

Our classic video, the **Mainstream is the Right Stream** was close captioned to ensure accessibility.

We contributed our two cents worth to the federal government during its on line 2009 budget consultation and shared our priorities about inclusive child care and supports for families raising children with special needs.

During the lead up to the election, SpecialLink worked with advocates in the child care and disability communities to highlight inclusive childcare as an election issue.

Donna and Sharon authored

Improving Quality, Enhancing Inclusion Partnerships for Inclusion ~ Nova Scotia ~ which describes the first four years of an innovative approach that combines assessment, on-site consultation, and the provision of resources and personal support to directors and lead educators (head teachers) in preschool rooms in licensed child care centres.

A big shout out for the energy, passion and dedication shown by our national board of directors and this year's symposium volunteers and presenters. We are so fortunate to have a solid volunteer base in our corner which allows SpecialLink to remain connected to the coast to coast inclusion community. Special appreciation to our local executive committee-Vic, Phil, Reg and Hubert for all their support to me personally and to SpecialLink.

Debra Mayer

Specialink

The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - MARCH 31, 2009

| | 2009 | 2008 |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| ASSETS | | |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | |
| Cash | \$ 41,411 | \$ 50,624 |
| Accounts receivable (NOTE 2) | 17,892 | 3,021 |
| GST / HST recoverable | 2,931 | 2,401 |
| Prepaid expenses | 4,087 | - |
| Inventory - resale | - | 978 |
| | <u>66,321</u> | <u>57,024</u> |
| CAPITAL ASSETS (net of amortization) | <u>1,142</u> | <u>1,632</u> |
| | \$ 67,463 | \$ 58,656 |
| LIABILITIES | | |
| CURRENT LIABILITIES | | |
| Accounts payable and accrued liabilities | \$ 2,400 | \$ 2,000 |
| Deferred revenue - 2008 Conference | - | 50,493 |
| | <u>2,400</u> | <u>52,493</u> |
| NET ASSETS | | |
| UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS | <u>65,063</u> | <u>6,163</u> |
| | \$ 67,463 | \$ 58,656 |
| <i>Hemenway Silver, Chartered Accountants</i> | | |

Specialink

The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS

YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2009

| | 2009 | 2008 |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| REVENUES | | |
| C.C.L grant - 2008/2009 and 2007/2008 | \$ 17,500 | \$ 35,000 |
| C.C.L grant - holdback, final payment | 17,500 | - |
| Other funding grants | 18,000 | - |
| Project training workshop revenues | 27,336 | 57,732 |
| Revenues - sale of books, DVD, etc | 6,436 | 6,030 |
| Membership fees | 2,797 | 2,185 |
| Rebates for GST / HST [@ 50 %] | 530 | 2,432 |
| | 90,099 | 103,379 |
| 2008 Conference, net profit | 49,849 | - |
| 2008 Conference, core cost recoveries | 17,846 | - |
| | 157,794 | 103,379 |
| EXPENSES | | |
| Amortization - office equipment | 490 | 699 |
| Staff salaries and benefits | 63,433 | 47,339 |
| Costs - sale of books, DVD's, etc | 6,207 | 4,022 |
| Project and workshop expenses | 4,657 | 18,770 |
| Project sub-contractors fees and expenses | 18,160 | 18,627 |
| Office and administration expenses | 2,359 | 3,803 |
| Professional fees | 2,400 | 2,000 |
| Travel | 1,188 | 9,125 |
| | 98,894 | 104,385 |
| EXCESS OF EXPENSES OVER REVENUES FOR THE YEAR | 58,900 | (1,006) |
| Unrestricted net assets, beginning of year | 6,163 | 7,169 |
| UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS, MARCH 31 | 65,063 | 6,163 |

**SpecialLink-the
National Centre for
Child Care Inclusion**

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**Working for an
inclusive Canada,
beginning with the
early years.**

SpecialLink puts researchers, policy makers, parents, early childhood educators, directors and other community professionals in touch with the best inclusive practices on the frontlines of Canadian child care.

SpecialLink's goal is to expand the quality and quantity of opportunities for inclusion in child care, recreation, education, and other community settings, to young children with special needs and their families.

**Our findings are available to
EVERYONE.**



SpecialLink

..... THE NATIONAL CENTRE FOR
CHILD CARE INCLUSION

www.speciallinkcanada.org