



2009-2010 Annual Report

Highlights this year

- SpeciaLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Rating Scale is published!
- Resource Centre regularly welcomes community members
- **We go international!** SpeciaLink presents 4 days of inclusion training in Australia, lectures about Canadian inclusion in The Netherlands!
- We present in 19 different communities and offer over 25 different workshops, keynotes, seminars and full day trainings, along with numerous talks to student groups, childcare staff meetings, etc.
- Quarterly e-bulletins broadcast to members

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SpeciaLink Early Childhood INCLUSION QUALITY SCALE



Sharon Hope Irwin

This year saw SpeciaLink publish two critical contributions to the early childhood inclusion evidence base. Our two year plus project funded by the **Canadian Council on Learning** came to an end and our deliverables are now being used by colleagues across Canada and around the world.

The project, *Assessing Inclusion Quality in Early Learning and Child Care In Canada with the SpeciaLink Child Care Inclusion Practices Profile and Principles Scale* led to the publication of the SpeciaLink Early Childhood Inclusion Quality Scale in the fall of 2009. This is an exciting and significant milestone for us. Our newest publication builds on the earlier workshop version, referencing comments from many of the 3000 workshop participants, and providing points of clarification that will help make scoring more accurate.

A companion research report prepared for the Canadian Council on Learning by Dr. Donna Lero and her research team at the University of Guelph allowed SpeciaLink to demonstrate the validity of the tool and its real usefulness to the transformational change that is moving Canadian early learning programs towards meaningful inclusion.

Please see our website for full details about these important resources.

Bravo to Sharon and Donna for all their hard work!

SpecialLink Membership Grows

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**SpecialLink
is as strong
as the
people who
support us!
We thank
you!**

This year, SpecialLink's membership grew to 473 groups, organizations and individuals representing thousands of service providers and families across Canada. Our reach is truly coast to coast to coast!

Special thanks to the ECE students at George Brown College in Toronto-it seems like an entire class joined SpecialLink as student members during the month of December.

SpecialLink thanks Staff and Consultants

Debra Mayer	Director
Sharon Irwin	Senior Researcher and Trainer
Lisa Maloney	Resource Centre
Cheryl Duffy	Membership and Administration
Sandy Tolman	Community Living Manitoba
	Webmaster, University of Winnipeg
Jen Abergel	Workshop presenters
Lise Thiessen	
Lori Peltz	
Tracy Crosser	
Erin Berezney	
Jo-Anne Sobczak	
Angela Robertson	
Sandra McDooling	

Ask SpecialLink

As a clearinghouse for information about inclusion, we receive dozens of telephone and email requests from various stakeholders across Canada and even from around the world. Here are just a small sample of the questions to which we responded:

I am writing today to ask for some direction with regard to dietary considerations for children with special needs. Are you aware of any provinces' policies, directives or regulations with regard to special diets in licensed child care?

*Coordinator Special Needs
Policy and Program Development
Early Childhood Development Services*

I would like to know whether there has been any work done on the cost of child-care for infirm children. Do you know of any Information sources that would provide more data on the difference between costs for childcare for healthy, infirm and DTC eligible children (i.e. those that have a severe or prolonged mental or physical infirmity and would be eligible for the Disability Tax Credit)?

*Senior Tax Policy Office
Tax Policy Branch
Department of Finance
Canada*

- **Toll free number**
- **Email**
- **Website**

Three ways we reach out to the early childhood inclusion community.

Inclusion Training & Support

In this membership year, SpecialLink staff, board and associates offered a wide range of training about inclusion across Canada, in the Netherlands and Australia. We appreciate the support and interest of training organizers who typically assume all costs to bring SpecialLink to their community!

Creating Places for All Children-How to Measure Inclusion Quality, and Why Early Childhood Resource Teachers Network of Ontario (ECRTNO) Conference 2009, Saint Catherine's ON (Debra Mayer)

Improving Quality and Enhancing the Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Child Care Programs: Integrating Research, Policy and Practice at The third international community, work and family conference Utrecht University, the Netherlands. (Donna Lero, Ph.D.)

Co-Creating Places for All Children Manitoba Child Care Association 32nd provincial conference Winnipeg MB. (Debra Mayer).

Co-Creating Places for All Children ECEBC provincial conference Vancouver BC (Debra Mayer)

SpecialLink: Inclusion in Action AECEO's 59th Annual Provincial Conference Windsor ON (Angela Robertson and Sandra McDooling)

Social Play in Inclusive Child Care Settings, and Creating A Place for All Children: Measuring Inclusion Quality In Early Childhood Programs and *Co-Creating Places for All Children* Quality First, Halton Region, ON (Debra Mayer)

Transition Planning Community Living Manitoba and CACL in partnership with The Manitoba Teachers' Society and the Manitoba Council for Leadership in Education: Summer Institute ~ Leadership and Collaboration in Inclusive Education (Debra Mayer)

Respite Care: How to Have Fun in the Community Safeguards Training for Children and Adult Services , Richmond Hill, ON (Debra Mayer)

Creating Places for All Children: Measuring Inclusion Quality In Early Childhood Programs YMCA-YWCA's School-Age Child Care City Wide training Winnipeg, MB (Debra Mayer)

No Easy Buttons and Fear Factor The Delta ECD Committee and Child Care Options, Delta, BC (Debra Mayer)

Le Colloque du Regroupement du Nord et de l'Ouest en petite enfance accueil Edmonton AB (Joanne Vinet)

4 days of customized inclusion training in Australia Melbourne, Australia (Dr. Sharon Hope Irwin)

2 keynote addresses, *Have You Got Attitude?* and *Inclusion Visionaries* and two workshops: *Creating a Place for All Children* and *Inclusion Success Stories* Making a Difference Through Inclusion, Hamilton, ON (Debra Mayer)

Inclusive Circle Time Strategies and *Inclusion Visionaries* Langara College ECE Program, Vancouver BC (Debra Mayer)

Disability and Inclusion: Changing Attitudes-Changing Policy Early Years Conference 2010 The Rights of the Child , Victoria BC (Debra Mayer)

Social Play in Inclusive Child Care Settings Comox Valley Early Childhood Educators of BC and Comox Valley Child Development Association, Supported Child Development Program Courtenay, BC (Debra Mayer)

Inclusive Block Party and *Creating Places for All Children*, New Brunswick Association for Community Living, Under One Sun Relationships Respect & Democratic Practices Fredericton, NB (Debra Mayer)

Inspiring Quality Inclusive Early Learning The GRIT Program From Policy to Practice Edmonton, AB (Debra Mayer)

Creating Places for All Children West Kootenay Boundary Supported Child Development Castlegar, BC (Dr. Sharon Hope Irwin)



Social Play in Inclusive Child Care Settings, for Quality First in Halton Region, Ontario

**Coast to
coast
and
round
the
world!**

CRPD

**Thursday March
11, 2010**

The Government of Canada ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) at the United Nations.

Canada pledged to be governed by the CRPD, the newest international human rights treaty which boldly articulates a human rights framework for addressing the exclusion and lack of access people with disabilities have encountered in Canada and in all societies.

National and International

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In 2009-2010, SpecialLink participated in consultations called by the Child Care Human Resource Sector Council, the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada, Campaign 2000, Barrier Free Manitoba, Inclusion Action—Dignity for All-the Campaign for a Poverty Free Canada and consultations called by the Government of Canada with respect to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In addition, we were pleased to be invited to participate in the *Children in the International Landscape of Disability* (Project CHILD) project conducted by Texas A&M University, which sought to identify policies, best practices and programs of promise around the world that could be replicated in other countries.

This report, while documenting positive, transformational change, also reveals that children with disabilities around the world, especially those in developing countries, face significant

barriers with respect to social inclusion, education and access to medical care.

Sharon Irwin took our inclusion message 'down under' where our training was well received through a 4 day series of sessions attended by well over 50 inclusion consultants, policy makers and service providers in Melbourne Australia. Well done, Sharon!

Debra Mayer's chapter, **Disability and Inclusion: changing attitudes-changing policy** appeared in *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.

09-10 funders and financial supporters (including 'service in kind')

thank you for your support

Canadian Council on Learning

Canadian Union of Postal Workers

The University of Guelph

The University of Winnipeg

Community Living Manitoba

Breton Books

And generous members who added donations to their membership fees!

Community of Practice

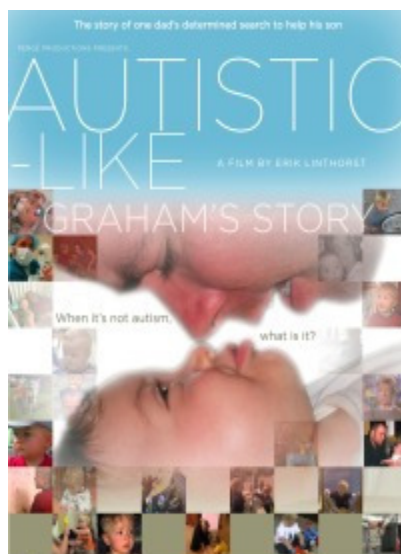
Responding to the local community's training and support needs

In 2009-2010 SpecialLink provided support to Community Living Manitoba's early childhood outreach efforts and its Child Care Inclusion Committee.

In response to the local community's interest in learning more about the inclusion of children on the autism spectrum, we hosted two well attended events at the University of Winnipeg

Autistic-Like: Graham's Story had its Canadian debut just ahead of the Thanksgiving Long Weekend. The film moved the audience of 120 greatly, and the panel of local experts, including government,

service providers, and parents helped the audience of parents, ECEs, students, teachers and professionals better understand sensory integration challenges and the



concurrent challenges faced by families as they navigate the system in search of treatment options.

In January, SpecialLink organized a full day workshop presented by Jo-Anne Sobczak and Erin Berezney, Province of Manitoba Autism Specialists, who shared information about the D.I.R./ Floortime approach developed by Dr. Stanley Greenspan and now being used successfully in many early learning and childcare programs in Manitoba.

The SpecialLink Resource Centre was open to the public by appointment and was utilized by students of

120+ parents, service providers and students gathered at the University of Winnipeg for the Canadian debut of **Graham's Story**, hosted by SpecialLink

the University of Winnipeg, government special services staff, and members of the ECE community (and even one inclusion friend visiting from Germany!)

SpecialLink worked with Community Living Manitoba to support and animate Winnipeg's Child Care Inclusion Committee and the Westman Inclusion Group, which offered its Fear Factor workshop in many centres in the Winnipeg and Brandon areas. SpecialLink was represented at meetings of the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba.

Thanks to our 2009-2010 board of directors

Winnipeg Executive

Vic Stone, Chair

Phil Baker, Vice Chair

Joanne Vinet, Secretary

Reg Malanchuk, CMA Treasurer

National Members

Ruth Bancroft, Vancouver BC

Dr. Donna Lero, Guelph ON

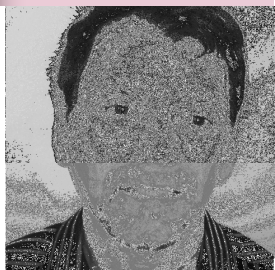
Margaret Burke, Glace Bay NS

Tracey Law, Fredericton, NB

Dixie Mitchell, Fredericton NB



Chairperson's report



Vic Stone,
Chairperson

It has been over 20 years since SpecialLink "went national". It is still identifiable as the premier Canadian service for and about child care inclusion. Our mission today is just as vital as it was 20 years ago; if we can get it right in the early years, then children grow up experiencing inclusion first hand.

As you may be aware despite our best efforts, we were unable to raise the \$75,000 set out at last year's national strategic planning meeting. The projected funding figure was the cost for running SpecialLink out of Winnipeg for 2010 -11. Debra and I worked very hard on several proposals submitted to the federal government. Unfortunately the political funding environment which faces all child care organizations in this country did not yield the desired results.

Kudos to Dr. Sharon Irwin and Dr. Donna Lero, for their completion of the development of a statistically sound, valid, reliable, user friendly and well accepted assessment tool for assessing inclusion quality in early childhood learning and child care centres. This importance of

this tool to advance the development of children with special needs, as well as typically developing children can not be overstated.

I'd also like to acknowledge Debra Mayer's valuable work on organizing SpecialLink's training programs around Canada, based on best practices in inclusion.

Thank you to our executive director "par excellence", Debra Mayer, for a job well done. It has been both an honour and a pleasure to work alongside her the last three years as chairperson of SpecialLink. Debra's work ethic and passion in the field of early childhood inclusion is well-known by her peers across this country. Her dedication, enthusiasm and expertise, have helped this organization stay alive and relevant over the last three years of funding challenges. We all wish Debra the very best in her future endeavors.

I'd like to thank members of the local executive committee

and the Board, for their dedication and hard work in helping our organization promote and advocate for inclusion of children with special needs.

I am very thankful to SpecialLink for the opportunity of serving as chairperson for the last three years. It has been both a very rewarding and a great learning experience for me. I've the good fortune to talk and meet with many inspirational and knowledgeable leaders in the field of inclusive child care from across this country.

Even though SpecialLink is moving its home from our land of open skies and endless prairies back to its roots, close to the high tides of Nova Scotia, I believe our national organization will continue to play an important role in promoting an inclusive Canada, which we all wholeheartedly know is both healthy and critical to our country's future.

Vic Stone

Director's Report



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

Dear members and friends of SpecialLink,

As Vic notes above despite our best efforts we were unable to secure the minimum level of financial support identified by our board to maintain operations in Winnipeg. As members read in earlier bulletins SpecialLink submitted 5 proposals to the federal government over the past four years, which sought to address key gaps in the inclusive early childhood infrastructure but to no avail.

We attempted to organize revenue producing workshops in Winnipeg but only two events proved viable. In addition, our board members **Ruth Bancroft** and **Dixie Mitchell** helped us to present SpecialLink in Vancouver and Fredericton, but these kinds of one off presentations cannot provide a core operational budget which is needed. Board member **Joanne Vinet** helped us maintain our bilingual capacity and she reached out

on our behalf to the franco-phone community. Over the past two years we have scaled back considerably on the scope of our work. We have sought to reduce costs wherever we could. We have certainly appreciated the financial support of our members but we are unable to continue in the long run without some type of sustaining funding.

As a result, our board made the difficult decision to further reduce our operations in 2010 -2011 by laying off our staff (me!) while maintaining SpecialLink's virtual presence on line. SpecialLink will continue on through the good will and determination of our wonderful board of directors and Sharon Irwin's willingness to take back the leadership in voluntary capacity.

In my 5 years as a staff for SpecialLink I have had the great fortune of meeting members and inclusion advocates from coast to coast to coast and to all of you, thank you for your efforts to support young children with additional needs and their families and to promote the concept of inclusion. I salute you!

Special thank-you's to our amazing board of directors, to **Sharon Irwin**, and to our local executive committee who have supported me in all the tough places: our chair: **Vic Stone**, treasurer **Reg Malanchuk**, secretary **Joanne Vinet** (merci!) and **Phil Baker** who provided us with a home at the University of Winnipeg for the past three years.

Best regards to all of you!

Special Ink

The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - MARCH 31, 2010

	2010	2009
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 2,654	\$ 50,624
Accounts receivable	-	3,021
GST / HST recoverable	2,973	2,401
Inventory - resale	-	978
	<u>5,627</u>	<u>57,024</u>
CAPITAL ASSETS (net of amortization)	<u>799</u>	<u>1,632</u>
	\$ 6,426	\$ 58,656
LIABILITIES		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 2,580	\$ 2,000
Deferred revenue - 2008 Conference	-	50,493
	<u>2,580</u>	<u>52,493</u>
NET ASSETS		
UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS	<u>3,846</u>	<u>6,163</u>
	\$ 6,426	\$ 58,656

Hemenway Silver, Chartered Accountants

Special Ink

The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2010

	2010	2009
REVENUES		
C.C.L. grant - 2008/2009 and 2007/2008	\$ -	\$ 17,500
C.C.L. grant - holdback, final payment	(546)	17,500
Other funding grants	-	18,000
Project training workshop revenues	20,700	27,336
Revenues - sale of books, DVD, etc	1,464	6,436
Membership fees	3,640	2,797
Rebates for GST / HST [@ 50 %]	90	530
	<u>25,348</u>	<u>90,099</u>
2008 Conference, net profit	-	49,849
2008 Conference, core cost recoveries	-	17,846
	<u>25,348</u>	<u>157,794</u>
EXPENSES		
Amortization - office equipment	343	490
Staff salaries and benefits	65,844	63,433
Costs - sale of books, DVD's, etc	1,405	6,207
Project and workshop expenses	5,012	22,817
Project - Community Living - Manitoba	7,500	-
Office and administration expenses	3,607	2,359
Professional fees	2,580	2,400
Travel	274	1,188
	<u>86,565</u>	<u>98,894</u>
EXCESS OF EXPENSES OVER REVENUES FOR THE YEAR	(61,217)	58,900
Unrestricted net assets, beginning of year	65,063	6,163
UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS, MARCH 31	<u>3,846</u>	<u>65,063</u>

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

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

Specialink 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.

Specialink'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.**



Specialink

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

www.specialinkcanada.org