



Annual Report 2007-08

April 1, 2007-March 31, 2008

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Inclusion Training & Support from coast to coast



Inclusive Block Party with Debra Mayer, at the Child Care Options Resource & Referral Program's Children the Heart of the Matter 11th annual child care conference —Play Matters February 2, 2008 Surrey BC

The numbers tell a story

- 82 new members this year joined our existing 171 members
- Keynotes and workshops in 24 communities across Canada
- Average 3200 discrete website visits per month to www.specialinkcanada.org

This year allowed Specialink to work in partnership with a number of organizations, associations, governments and training institutions to bring our training and our approach to inclusion to communities across Canada. Specialink previously had federal funding which allowed us to travel at little cost to community groups. Our shift to training by contract has put more of an onus on the group's ability to secure other funding in order for Specialink to be in attendance. We were proud and pleased to offer keynotes and workshops in 24 different communities across Canada. These included provincial, national & international events, and training for the military

family resource community, Aboriginal Head Start programs, child care, early years, disability, early intervention and other groups.

Our work on reflecting about and assessing inclusion is increasingly being embedded in other kinds of training vehicles. For example with funding support by Child Development Branch, Alberta Children's Services, **Bow Valley College** and **Specialink** collaborated to develop an introductory training program comprised of 12 modules for front-line child care providers and child care facility/ program owner/ operators who work with children receiving services under the Inclusive Child Care Funding Program.

Chairperson's report

As the new Chairperson of SpecialLink I'd like to acknowledge the contribution of **Shirley Chernin**, our former chairperson of sixteen years, who played a leadership role in making high quality inclusive child care a reality in Canada.

I'd also like to highlight the broad depth of expertise that we have on our Board. Our pan-Canadian Board members are educators, practitioners and parents, all having a wealth of experience in working on behalf of inclusion for children with special needs.

We are indeed very fortunate to have **Debra Mayer** as our new Executive Director. Her dedication, hard work and infectious enthusiasm will serve our organization well in promoting SpecialLink's goal to expand the quality and quantity of opportunities for inclusion in child care.

As a non-profit organization competing for limited financial resources, SpecialLink will be challenged over the next year to find ongoing sources of funding. The Board would welcome input from the membership that would help us expand our financial base and aid us in continuing to make a real difference for children with special needs and their families.

My belief is that inclusive, affordable, accessible, and comprehensive mainstream child care is a fundamentally worthy Canadian value, which our organization will continue to resolutely advance this coming year through research, resource, public policy, training and advocacy. May two thousand and eight be an auspicious year for our organization and the people we serve.



Vic Stone, SpecialLink Chair

We get mail!

Dear SpecialLink:
You guys rock!

I am organizing and updating our video collection at the Provincial Office for Infant Development Program of BC. We have the 1992 *The Mainstream is the Right Stream* video and we were wondering if the video has been updated since 1992, and if the updated version would be available in DVD format.

D. W. Vancouver

Good news D.—Our classic favourite has been re-mastered and is now available on DVD in both French and English! We are seeking community partners and funders to help us produce a new inclusion DVD—contact us if interested!



SpecialLink thanks our 2007-08 board of directors

Chairperson: Vic Stone (Parent) Winnipeg, MB

Vice Chair: Phil Baker (University of Winnipeg) Winnipeg, MB

Secretary: Hubert Fenton Smedts (Centre Director) Winnipeg, MB

Treasurer: Reg Malanchuk, CMA (Community Living Manitoba) Winnipeg, MB

Ruth Bancroft (Centre Director) Vancouver, BC

Margaret Burke (Centre Director) Glace Bay, NS

Tracey Law (Centre Director) Fredericton, NB

Mary-Anne Bédard (Toronto Children's Services) Toronto ON

Ex officio: Dr. Sharon Hope Irwin

Shirley Chernin (community volunteer and founding Chair)

Sydney NS (RESIGNED)

Action Research—two year project funding by Canadian Council on Learning

Assessing inclusion quality in early childhood learning and child care (ELCC) in Canada with the SpecialLink Child Care Inclusion Practices and Principles Scales

The overall purpose of project led by **Dr. Sharon Irwin**, Senior Researcher in collaboration with **Dr. Donna Lero** from the University of Guelph is to complete 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 settings. The completion of this tool will advance the development of children with special needs as well as typically developing children and children of diverse ethno-cultural status in inclusive early childhood learning and child care (ELCC) settings, by contributing objective, evidence-based inclusion quality measures to the field — measures that will suggest next steps for parents, individual practitioners, classrooms,

centres, trainers, researchers and policy makers.

The tool will help to improve the assessment of early childhood learning, as it applies to children with disabilities in inclusive services. This research will complete an evidence-based, valid, reliable, well-accepted and user-friendly tool for assessing of inclusion quality in early childhood learning and child care settings — critical for go-forward funding and programming, but also for on-going evaluation and program review.

Knowledge Exchange-funded by Canadian Council on Learning

Early Childhood Inclusion: Applying Lessons Learned Symposium & Source Book

This work allows us to apply our shared knowledge of early intervention and inclusive practices for children with special support needs. Our national transdisciplinary gathering of researchers and the practice communities will be held in 2008 at the University of Winnipeg. In its lead-up, participants have helped

develop the themes and symposium agenda as committee members, presenters and participants. Other knowledge exchange plans include updates to SpecialLink's website and popularized print and electronic communications. This event will be the first such national gathering in over 16 years and will be reported on with a Sourcebook published and distributed before December 2008 and in our next year's annual report!

Over 2500 Canadians have taken part in our inclusion training over the past three years and many are regularly using the tools in their own support for inclusion. Key work in 2007-08 has been to incorporate all participant comments and suggestions in an updated version of the inclusion quality assessment tools and manual, and 2) refine the instruments, the SpecialLink Child Care Inclusion Practices and Principles Scale (Workshop Version) to meet standards for high quality research.

SpecialLink thanks its staff and consultants

Debra Mayer, Executive Director
Dr. Sharon Irwin, Senior Researcher
Donna Michal, Project Consultant
James Fader, Website
Robyn Rybachuk, Resource Centre

SpecialLink thanks its community & academic partners

- **Community Living Manitoba**
- **The University of Winnipeg**

Executive Director's Update

I am pleased to update SpecialLink friends and funders about this past year which has certainly had its challenges and achievements. Despite my size 10 feet, Sharon Irwin left big shoes to fill. She has continued to be my hero and my mentor and I thank Sharon for her continued involvement as our Senior Researcher and as my sounding board. I have worked hard this year to strengthen SpecialLink's role as a nexus point for our inclusive community of practice (CoP) and thank SpecialLink's Winnipeg based executive committee and members of Community Living Manitoba board and Child Care Inclusion Committee for their support for

If we can get it right in the early years, then children grow up experiencing inclusion first hand. The work you do each day to build an inclusive Canada is critical to our country's future.

Thank you!

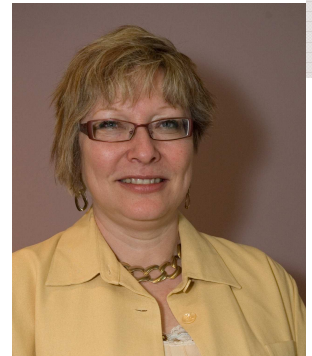
SpecialLink. As our financial administrator, **Community Living Manitoba** has made it easier for me to focus on SpecialLink. Our location at the **University of Winnipeg** has become a home for inclusion advocates, and I thank the university administration for their incredible support for our work. The Province of Manitoba supported the set up of our resource centre (which continues to be a work in progress) welcoming students and professionals to an array of resources.

Thanks to the resourcefulness of community based organizations across Canada, I have been able to represent SpecialLink at several dozen different training opportunities and everywhere I have traveled I have seen the commitment to inclusion in the hearts of early childhood educators, directors and other professionals. I have been honoured at the confidence shown in our work by parents, and want to especially thank **Vic Stone**, SpecialLink's Chairperson, for his friendship and commitment to the ideals that guide our work and for being such a wonderful father and

advocate for his son.

SpecialLink has moved from a time where major projects were funded via multi year federal grants to the reality that faces many non profits that work on behalf of children and families. The **Canadian Council on Learning** has helped SpecialLink to continue our key work around our inclusion assessment scales and to expand our role as a connector and clearinghouse for those who care about inclusion. Most of the planning for our SpecialLink Symposium was completed in this fiscal year which at the time of writing, is almost **SOLD OUT!**

SpecialLink will continue to advocate for a national system of inclusive early learning and care congruent with Canada's commitments to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Our work with allies such as the Canadian Association for Community Living, Code Blue for Child Care and the Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada at the national level and with local groups such as the Child Care Coalition of Manitoba will surely help us to achieve that goal!



Inclusion Action: Federal Pre-budget Consultations

Each year, the Government of Canada's Standing Committee on Finance holds pre-budget consultations across Canada. SpecialLink prepared a brief that addressed inclusion of children with special needs, barriers faced by their parents, and the relationship to high quality child care. **Dr Sharon Irwin** presented our recommendations to the Committee in Halifax on December 6, 2007. Our recommendations included:

- *Ensure entitlement and access to disability related supports for children will no longer be 'means tested' against household income.*
- *Launch a specific child care human resource and training strategy to support the inclusion of children with special needs.*

Fund a comprehensive Federal/ Provincial/ Territorial government child care agreement with effective monitoring and public accountability to advance the full inclusion of children with disabilities and to address child poverty.

Community embraces SpecialLink membership

In 2007 our membership grew to 253 individuals, organizations and affiliates, representing a diverse range of affiliations and all regions of Canada.

Individual members include: parents of children with special needs, inclusion and intervention consultants, trainers and faculty members, students, early childhood educators and family child care providers, and others. Here is a sampling of our organizational and affiliate members:

Disability organizations such as

- Community Living Manitoba
- Community Living Hamilton
- Brampton Community Living
- Community Living Mississauga

ECE training institutions such as

- Assiniboine Community College
- St. Clair College
- Red River College
- Seneca College of Applied Arts & Technology
- University of Victoria
- College of the Rockies
- Bow Valley College
- George Brown College
- University of Winnipeg
- Northwest Community College

Family Resource agencies such as

- Goose Bay Military Family Resource Centre (GBMFRC)
- Daybreak Parent Child Centre
- Oliver Centre Early Learning Programs for Children and Families Society

- East Kootenay Child Care Resource and Referral
- Autism Society
- Guelph Community Health Centre
- Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYC)
- Family Resource Program Canada

Service providers:

- Morrow Avenue Child Care Programs for Families
- YMCA-YWCA Creative Play Day Care
- Island Montessori House School
- HuggaBunch Inclusive Family Child Development Centre
- Kid's Club Afterschool Program
- Discovery Children's Centre
- Royal West Early Learning Centre
- View Royal Out of School Care Society
- Webber Road Community Centre
- Carrot Seed Preschool

Early Intervention programs:

- Cowichan Valley Supported Child Development Program (BC)
- Preschool Enrichment Program (Brandon, MB)
- Peel Infant Development & Service Resolution Peel
- The Grit Program
- Renfrew Educational Services
- Dartmouth Preschool HeadStart project
- Oliver Centre Early Learning Programs for Children and Families Society

Technical assistance providers:

- Partnerships for Inclusion Nova Scotia

Professional associations:

- ECCENB NB Association

Aboriginal/Inuit organizations such as

- Mushuau Innu Child Care Centre (Labrador)
- Ashea Daycare (Yukon)
- Houston Friendship Centre (BC)

Government funders, consultants and licensing agencies such as

- Toronto Childrens Services
- Family Services of Haliburton County
- Region 4, Saskatchewan Learning
- Nova Scotia Department of Community Services
- Manitoba Children's Special Services
- Infant Development Program, Office of Provincial Advisor, BC
- Health and Community Services St. John's Region

Labour groups

- Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Now that's commitment to inclusion!

In 2007/08, all 19 staff of Children's Co-op in Prince Albert

Saskatchewan join SpecialLink as individual members. Debra visits the staff and centre in PA and offers inclusion training later the same year.

Strategic Directions 2005-08

In 2005, Specialink developed a strategic plan which has been guiding our activities in the past 3 years. Despite profound political changes at both the federal and provincial levels, Specialink has moved forward on a number of these, including: **Increase capacity in governance**—recruitment of a national board of directors and local executive committee; financial support via Community Living Manitoba; national symposium planning committee. **Strengthen cross-sectoral linkages and partnerships**—relationships forged and strengthened with Community Living Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, Canadian Association for Community Living, Child Care Human Resources Sector Council, Division of Early Childhood, colleges, provincial government offices, and others. **Increased community outreach**—24 workshops across Canada; stronger web presence; bi monthly electronic bulletins, articles in professional journals. **Strengthened organizational administration**—new executive director in place; full year in operation at the UW, hands on local executive committee, CMA as our Treasurer.

Longer term goals that we continue to work towards: Updated policy and program statements including 3rd party monitoring tools; and increased effectiveness in meeting the social developmental needs and aspirations of children with special needs and their families.

We have increased active participation of membership in services and products of organization such as our wonderful Symposium Planning Committee. We have worked to obtain broad buy-in to inclusion statements and to our inclusion rating tools. We have re-established and strengthened our national board as sources of decision-making, info/knowledge, as feedback loop, and as visible presence in the regions they represent. In August 2008 our board will meet face to face to develop a new strategic plan for the next phase of our work, and we will report on this to members in the near future.

Inclusion training & support con't from p. 1

BC: Specialink was contracted by British Columbia's Infant Development/ Supported Child Development Consortium (ID/SCD), in the redevelopment of their Partnerships Materials. Debra is the course author for the module, Inclusive Child Care Settings.

QC: Another exciting piece of inclusion capacity building is Sharon's support to a project sponsored by the **Kativik Regional Government** in Nunavik. Our Practices and Principles were translated into Inuktitut and are included in the training modules for centre directors in the far north.

NB: **Dixie Mitchell** and **Debra Mayer** coauthored *Celebrating children: Planning for their similarities and differences*. Foundational paper for the New Brunswick Curriculum Framework for Early Learning Child Care.

NS: Partnerships for Inclusion—Nova Scotia is a multi-year project, funded by the Nova Scotia government, whose goal is to increase accessibility and quality of inclusion of children with special needs in child care centres through a on-site consultation process which includes use of the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale – Revised (ECERS-R) scales on a pre/post/ sustainability basis as well as the Specialink Child Care Inclusion Scales, also on a pre/post/ sustainability basis. From the beginning of PFI—NS, the government of Nova Scotia contracted with **Dr. Sharon Irwin** of Specialink to provide consultation to the project as well as formative and summative evaluation. **Dr. Donna Lero**, at the University of Guelph has co-directed this work.

Our scales are now being used to support the efforts of child care practitioners by BC's Supported Child Development program, The City of Toronto's Children's Services, Nova Scotia's Partnerships for Inclusion, Prince Edward Island's Bridges program, New Brunswick's Opening the Door to Quality Childcare & Development, and Newfoundland's Enhancing Quality and Inclusive Practices. They are also used by Community Living Manitoba's Inclusive Child Care Capacity Building Project which has offered inclusion mentoring to 20 centres over the past few years.

Specialink

The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AND UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2008

	2008
REVENUES	
C.C.L grant - 2007/2008	\$ 35,000
Project and training workshop revenues	57,732
Revenues - sale of books, DVD, etc	6,030
Membership fees	2,185
Rebates for GST [@ 50 %]	2,432
	<u>103,379</u>
EXPENSES	
Amortization - office equipment	699
Staff salaries and benefits	47,339
Costs - sale of books, DVD's, etc	4,022
Project and workshop expenses	18,770
Project sub-contractors fees and expenses	18,627
Office and administration expenses	3,803
Professional fees	2,000
Travel	9,125
	<u>104,385</u>
EXCESS OF EXPENSES OVER REVENUES FOR THE YEAR	(1,006)
Unrestricted net assets, beginning of year	<u>7,169</u>
UNRESTRICTED NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	<u>6,163</u>

Specialink

The National Centre for Child Care Inclusion

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - MARCH 31, 2008

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

Hemenway Silver, Chartered Accountants

SpecialLink- the National Centre for Child Care Inclusion

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Inclusion begins
with the early years

We're on the web!
www.speciallinkcanada.org

Who are we?

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.

What is SpecialLink?

A helpline, clearinghouse and virtual resource and research centre located at the University of Winnipeg, SpecialLink provides personalized responses to specific questions, referrals and links to other organizations or sources of help, up to date inclusion information, and technical assistance including keynotes, workshops, curriculum and program development and program evaluation.

SpecialLink

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



Thanks to our project funders in 2007-08

- The Canadian Council on Learning
- Government of Nova Scotia Partnerships for Inclusion — Nova Scotia
- Government of Manitoba-SpecialLink Resource Centre at the University of Winnipeg
- Centre for Excellence for Children and Adolescents with Special Needs-prototype proposal for the Environmental Scan by CECASN at Lakehead University, Ontario.
- Canadian Union of Postal Workers-translation and DVD conversion of media resources.

Website feedback and a question

I discovered your site while working in an architect's office on the design for a daycare for 25% disabled children. It is very rich in information....Can you point to or send us links to any research or studies that will help us in presenting the position for the benefits of a more tranquil and smaller group vs a larger more boisterous group for a child with global developmental delay and short attention? Thank you.

G. C. in Quebec