



## Newsletter, Issue 3: July 2009

This issue of the Newsletter introduces the Special Education subgroup that has been established with approval of the C2 Steering Group (SG). After the ECG officially established a first subgroup on disability at its May 2008 meeting, the next step involved founding subgroups in related areas such as literacy and language, and special education. See ECG Newsletter, Issue 2: January 2009 ([http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/education\\_articles/ecg\\_newsletters.php](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/education_articles/ecg_newsletters.php)). We encourage you to participate with one or more of the ECG subgroups, or to propose another subgroup.

Thank you for your interest in the Education Coordinating Group (ECG) of the Campbell Collaboration (C2). A special thank you to all those who also attended the ECG meeting at the Campbell Colloquium held 18-20 May 2009 in Oslo, Norway.

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### Contents

Changes in ECG Leadership .....	1
ECG Editorial Update.....	2
Special Education Subgroup.....	2
ECG Participation in Oslo at the 9 <sup>th</sup> C2 Colloquium.....	4
ECG Co-Chair Election .....	4
Contact us.....	4

### Changes in ECG Leadership

Dr. Carole J. Torgerson has tendered a letter to the C2 Co-chairs and Secretariat indicating she will not be a candidate for ECG Co-Chair in the upcoming election. In an email to the Members and Affiliates of the ECG, Carole said, "In particular I should like to thank all present and past review teams for undertaking systematic reviews under the auspices of the Education Group. I wish those of you who are currently working on reviews all the very best for successful completion and publication of your reviews. I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks for all other contributions, large and small, including contributed presentations at the Colloquia, attendance at training sessions, peer reviews of protocols and reviews, and interest in and support of the work of the Education Group." While we certainly are sorry to see Carole go, her contribution and collegiality over the past two years are much appreciated. She will continue to participate in the ECG from her busy position as Reader in Evidence-based Education, Institute for Effective Education, at the University of York.

Dr. Julia Lavenberg has also stepped down as Managing Editor after several years in this demanding role. We thank Julia for all her hard work, especially for establishing a system for managing the communication and records involved with inquiries and submissions for systematic reviews in the education arena. The position of Managing Editor requires about one day a week to assist with the record keeping involved in the review process. Please contact Dr. Chad Nye ([cnye@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:cnye@mail.ucf.edu)) if you are interested in the position and would like to know more about the responsibilities and duties.

Mr. David Pickup has recently assumed the duties of part-time Trials Search Advisor. In this capacity, he conducts database searches for ECG reviewers and provides advice on information retrieval. The ECG thanks Ms. Katherine Hanz, who served several months in this position. Both Katherine and David received their MLIS degrees from McGill University. You may contact David at [dpickup@education.concordia.ca](mailto:dpickup@education.concordia.ca)



## **ECG Editorial Update**

Co-chair Chad Nye and Ralf Schlosser are serving as Editors for the ECG. There are 3 protocols that have been approved and the reviews are underway, and 3 more protocols are in the review process. A total of 8 protocols have been approved and submitted for review, and 3 reviews are currently in the revision process. Please browse the recently re-designed Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews to see the Education topics, protocols, and completed reviews: <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/library.php>

## ***Special Education Subgroup***

After the ECG had officially established a first subgroup on disability at its May 2008 meeting, the next step involved founding subgroups in related areas such as literacy and language, and special education. The special education subgroup was officially announced and convened with the ECG at the October 21-22, 2008 planning meeting.

The interdisciplinary focus of the special education subgroup is on evidence-based practices and systematic reviews regarding interventions and assessments for infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities ages birth through 21 in an educational context. This population comprises high incidence disabilities (e.g., attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, mild intellectual disabilities, serious emotional disturbances, specific learning disabilities, among others), as well as low incidence disabilities (e.g., deafness, deaf-blindness, multiple disabilities, severe autism spectrum disorders, severe intellectual disability, traumatic brain injury, vision impairment, etc.). Within this population the special education subgroup is interested in any systematic review topic related to assessments, interventions or policy decisions in special education. Such topics could be, but are not limited to the following:

- Assistive technology and/or augmentative and alternative communication to facilitate learning and communication
- Behavior modification and regulation intervention and related functional assessments
- Cognitive strategies including self-regulated learning, mnemonics and other memory enhancement strategies
- Comprehensive preschool and school-based interventions targeting developmental, cognitive, communicative, academic, social, behavioral, and functional outcomes
- Corrective feedback, formative evaluation and other feedback strategies
- Interventions and strategies for arranging the context of learning, such as inclusive education, cooperative group teaching, peer tutoring and parent involvement
- Strategies to enhance competence and prepare learners for the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)

Further “hot topics in education” that also apply to special education can be found on the ECG website at [http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/education\\_articles/hot\\_topics\\_education.php](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/education_articles/hot_topics_education.php).

The critical reader might raise the question as to why it is important to have a subgroup on special education? The concept of evidence-based practice as the premier paradigm to service delivery is omnipresent in the fields of disability and rehabilitation (NCDDR, 2006; Schlosser, 2009) and this notion is gradually gaining more and more attention in special education. Evidence-based movements in the US, for example, were accelerated by federal legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) and the Education Sciences Reform Act (ESRA, 2002). These movements emphasize greater accountability for positive academic outcomes, while promoting the use of effective educational practices supported by



scientifically based research (Simpson, LaCava, & Graner, 2004). Such standards call for reporting intervention efficacy through objective and statistically reliable syntheses of the research literature that can be interpreted across the field and that permit comparisons between approaches and strategies. The need to conduct and disseminate systematic reviews is evident.

In addition to questions about intervention efficacy, the field of special education continuously faces policy decisions (e.g., relative to inclusive education, eligibility for services, curriculum development). Although policy formulation is influenced by a variety of factors, research evidence should be the foundation that is supplemented by wisdom and experience to meet real-world scenarios (Kavale & Forness, 2000). To make informed policy decisions it is critical to review “what the research says”. Systematic reviews of special education research following the C2 standards are an excellent tool to facilitate this process and a good reason for C2 to devote a more focused subgroup to this field.

For the near future the ECG special education subgroup has established the following preliminary objectives:

- Recruit individuals with expertise in special education and/or related fields for the further development of the subgroup
- Elicit and maintain a series of high-quality and timely systematic reviews targeting evidence-based practices in special education contexts
- Contribute to the further development of necessary methodology to conduct systematic reviews of special education research (e.g., meta-analysis of single-subject experimental designs)
- Provide training opportunities for prospective systematic review authors or teams in the production of C2 reviews in special education. For a list of upcoming events please see the ECG event website at <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/event/index.php>

Oliver Wendt, PhD, Assistant Professor of Special Education, and Assistant Professor of Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences at Purdue University, serves as coordinator of the subgroup. Individuals with an interest or background in special education who would be motivated to become more involved with steering and further developing the special education subgroup are highly encouraged to contact Dr. Wendt. Researchers aiming at conducting a systematic review in the area of special education are also urged to get in touch with Dr. Wendt. Many helpful resources are available to authors and research teams of systematic reviews, through the special education subgroup. These include, for example,

- Help with identifying funding sources for conducting special education systematic reviews
- Literature retrieval strategies, particularly for covering interdisciplinary fields
- Resources and assistance with systematic reviews of single-subject experimental designs (SSEDs) as well as group designs
- Effect size calculations for SSEDs and their synthesis
- Statistical analyses of single-subject research data and their application within generic statistical packages (R, SAS and SPSS)
- Reporting and interpreting single-subject and/or group design meta-analyses in a special education context

Adding a subgroup on special education to the ECG provides an opportunity to further support evidence-based practice movements in this field through producing, maintaining, and disseminating rigorous, high-quality systematic reviews. These will provide a valuable resource for various stakeholders to inform decision-making in special education contexts, and guide future research efforts. To reach these goals, the new special education subgroup urgently needs individuals with expertise to step forward and to volunteer with developing systematic reviews following the C2 guidelines.



For additional information and to get involved in the ECG subgroup on special education please contact:

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### ECG Participation in Oslo at the 9<sup>th</sup> C2 Colloquium

The ECG hosted a Symposium of Systematic Reviews from the Disability Subgroup, led by ECG Co-Chair Carole Torgerson, University of York, UK. Members of the panel included: Rooshey Hasnain, University of Illinois (*The Use of Cultural Competency Educational Interventions to Improve Rehabilitation Service Access and Outcomes for Culturally Diverse Individuals with Disabilities*); Ralf Schlosser, Northeastern University (*The Effects of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) on children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)*); John Westbrook, SEDL (*Effectiveness of adult employment assistance services for persons with autism spectrum disorders (ASD)*); and Stacy Pavelko, University of Central Florida (*Effectiveness of storybook reading to increase vocabulary skills in at risk preschool students*). During the Colloquium, another 8 papers and 2 posters were presented in the Education Track. See the C2 Colloquium 2009: <http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/Colloquium/Colloquium.shtml>

### ECG Co-Chair Election

The C2 Governance plan calls for the rotating election of Coordinating Group Co-Chairs every 18 months beginning with the 2009 calendar year. The election to fill the Co-chair slot vacated by Carole Torgerson will be organized and conducted through the C2 Secretariat's office. Members of the ECG should be receiving information in the near future.

### Contact us

If you know of anyone who might be interested in C2 generally and the Education Coordinating Group specifically, or if you have information for future newsletters, please contact Co-Chair/Editor **Chad Nye**, [cnye@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:cnye@mail.ucf.edu); Editor **Ralf Schlosser**, [r.schlosser@neu.edu](mailto:r.schlosser@neu.edu); or Newsletter Editor, **Joann Starks**, [joann.starks@sedl.org](mailto:joann.starks@sedl.org)

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