Hardman Center
for Children with Learning Differences

Annual Report

University of Oklahoma
The Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education
Department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum

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Mission of the University of Oklahoma

The mission of the University of Oklahoma is to provide the best possible educational experience for our students through excellence in teaching, research and creative activity, and service to the state and society.

Vision of the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education

The mission of the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education is to promote inquiry that fosters democratic life and is fundamental to the interrelated activities of teaching, research, and practice in the multidisciplinary fields of education.

Vision of the Department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum

The mission of the Department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum is to prepare teachers and other professionals for leadership roles in education-related settings; to engage in critical inquiry through professionally recognized research and scholarship; and to provide leadership to the profession and society.

Vision of the Hardman Center

The Hardman Center has a dual objective of outreach across the state to assist parents, teachers and schools in helping children with learning differences be more successful in school, and of applied research to close the gap between best and current practices in literacy education.

This goal of outreach and applied research aligns with the missions of the University of Oklahoma, the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education, and the Department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum.

History of the Hardman Center

The Hardman Center for Children with Learning Differences was created through a gift from Ruth G. Hardman, a longtime Tulsa resident known for her philanthropy and interest in literacy and education. Work at the center began under Kathryn Haring, Ph.D., who was the Hardman Professor from 2002-2007. Beginning in August 2007, Priscilla Griffith, Ph.D., became the director of the Hardman Center. At that time, as director of the Oklahoma Writing Project, she incorporated that project under the umbrella of the Hardman Center.

Hardman Center Development Plans

Upcoming development plans for the Hardman Center include the selection of an advisory board to oversee the activities of the center and the implementation of an annual symposium to bring renowned literacy scholars to the University of Oklahoma to interact with teachers and students concerning current topics in their fields.
Hardman Center Faculty and Graduate Research Assistants

**Priscilla L. Griffith, Ph.D.** holds the Hardman Chair in Education and directs the Hardman Center. She has worked in public schools in Texas and South Carolina as a classroom teacher and a central office administrator. She has held tenured faculty positions at the universities of South Florida and Arkansas. At the University of Oklahoma, she is a professor of literacy education in the Department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum. Language and literacy development has been the common thread that runs through all of her scholarly work.

**Kristen Hodge** is a doctoral student in the Reading Education program in the Department of Instructional Leadership and Academic Curriculum. She is an early-childhood educator and a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certified teacher. Kristen was the Hardman graduate assistant during the spring and summer of 2008. While working at the Hardman Center, she prepared reading lists on urban education and struggling adolescent readers.

**Deepa Maheshwari** is a master’s degree student in the Community Counseling program in the Department of Educational Psychology. A former elementary school teacher, Deepa currently is working on a project to abstract articles on literacy coaching.

**Hardman Center Activities**

**Outreach**

**Language and Literacy for the Preschool Child:** The goal of this project was to provide professional development to early-childhood teachers who were part of Project LEARN, a Choctaw Nation Early Reading First grant. Professor Griffith traveled weekly to Atoka County to conduct a seminar on early literacy learning with the teachers. This project continued through fall 2007.

**Every Student Reads Project:** The goal of this ongoing community service project is to provide high-quality professional development to teachers in participating high-need schools in Seminole County. The project supports their learning and implementation of research-based best practices in reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction.

**Cross-Age Development in Reading:** This ongoing service-learning project involves OU students as “reading buddies” with students at Adams Elementary School in Norman. This project is ongoing.

**Oklahoma Writing Project:** The Oklahoma Writing Project, a site of the National Writing Project, is a network of programs dedicated to improving the quality of composition instruction in elementary and secondary schools. During 2007-2008, the Oklahoma Writing Project provided 27,328 program service contact hours through core programs that include the annual summer institute for teachers; conferences for teachers; in-service to schools; and youth, family and community programs. Through a partnership with the Special Education Department of the State Department of Education and Oklahoma State University Writing Project, the Oklahoma Writing Project presented Saturday conferences at seven different venues throughout the winter of 2007-2008, reaching more than 400 teachers in 68 counties across the state.
**Applied Research**

**Acceleration Model:** Professor Griffith continued her work with colleagues in the College of Continuing Education (Susan Kimmel, Ph.D., Joey Fronheiser, Ph.D., Belinda Biscoe, Ph.D. and Lucy Trautman, M.Ed.) to develop a model of professional development for teachers that will result in accelerated outcomes for at-risk children. A preliminary report of this model was presented at the National Reading Conference annual meeting in Orlando in 2008. Data supporting the model collected through Early Reading First grants indicate that the literacy achievement outcomes of at-risk pre-kindergarten children are accelerated over the literacy outcomes of similarly matched at-risk peers. The next phase in the validation of this model is to compare the achievement of at-risk children in classrooms in which teachers participate in professional development to the achievement of middle class peers. The model is explained below.

This model is effective because it creates an upward spiral of closing the gap in student achievement and in implementation of best practices. As teachers realize their instruction can have an impact on student outcomes, they are motivated to strive toward excellence in their instruction: the improved quality of teaching results in greater student achievement. Feedback on accelerated student achievement is presented to teachers through progress monitoring data. The improvement in the quality of instruction is brought about through professional development classes and coaches working side-by-side with teachers in their classrooms to help them implement best practices instruction. Below is a graphic of the model.
The context for the University of Oklahoma Early Reading First (OU-ERF) acceleration model is a research-based curriculum embedded within an appropriate environment. Appropriate environment includes aspects found within evidence-based pre-school curricula. These aspects encompass a safe and interesting physical environment (e.g., interest centers, literacy-rich displays of children’s work, classroom library and writing center, alphabet displays, etc.); a daily routine, with small and large group time, that incorporates literacy as part of both focused and indirect instruction; and a classroom community in which oral language is stressed for relation building as well as problem-solving. The ERF curriculum stresses early language, cognitive and pre-reading skills that prepare children for continued school success. Pre-reading skills include oral language development, phonological awareness, print awareness and alphabet knowledge. Optimal learning for acceleration occurs at the intersection of progress monitoring and content knowledge. Progress monitoring occurs through informal assessments administered multiple times through the year. Teachers develop content knowledge via ongoing professional development classes. In this model, coaching is the link between progress monitoring and content knowledge. Through interaction with teachers, literacy coaches are a catalyst to enable teachers to plan instruction arising from professional development and informed by progress-monitoring data. In this model, each of the five components (appropriate environment, research-based curriculum, coaching, progress monitoring and content knowledge) is necessary for optimal learning (OLS) to occur; however, none alone are sufficient to create an OLS for acceleration. This evidence-based model has been implemented in ERF projects at the University of Oklahoma.

Grants


National Writing Project, Oklahoma Writing Project continued funding 2007, $46,000. Principal Investigator and Project Director: Priscilla Griffith.

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Oklahoma Regents of Higher Education, No Child Left Behind, $85,000 for one year (2009). Every Student Reads II. Principal Investigators: Priscilla Griffith and Jiening Ruan.
Hardman Center Scholarly Accomplishments

Award: Priscilla Griffith, Ph.D., won the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education Faculty Research Award for 2008.


Presentations at National/International Conferences:


