



Published WORKS

College of Education and Human Services

Utah State University

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES MARCH 2004



From the Associate Dean

This issue of **Published Works** features three publications of the faculty and staff at the Center for Persons with Disabilities. With a total of more than 70 publications for the Center for the year, I am sure it was difficult for Sarah Rule, Director, to select just three. It is exciting to be a part of such a productive group of faculty as are found in the College of Education and Human Services. We are also pleased to recognize the USU CURI grant recipients, and Dr. Ray Reutzel, the College Scholar/Researcher for 2004-05.

Sincerely,

Carol Strong



The Role of Early Language Experience in Children with Hearing Loss

Susan Nittrouer, Ph.D.,
and Lisa Thuente Burton, B.A.

Early experience with a native language serves to shape the perceptual strategies used to derive phonetic structure from the speech signal. In turn, the ability to derive phonetic structure facilitates language processing by allowing long sequences of linguistic material to be stored in working memory. Consequently, deficits in early language experience can lead to problems in the related skills of speech perception and language processing.

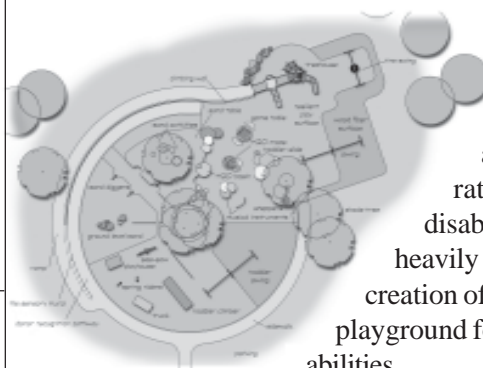
The goal of this study was to test the prediction that children with hearing loss would demonstrate problems with speech perception and language processing consistent with what we would expect from children who had deficits in early language experience. Children ages 8 to 10 years with hearing loss were tested on four types of tasks: (a) speech perception; (b) phonetic awareness; (continued on back)

Inclusive Outdoor Learning Environments

Keith Christensen and Jill Morgan



Keith Christensen works as a Landscape Architect through the Center for Persons with Disabilities at Utah State University where he specializes in outdoor playspace design for children with disabilities. As both a parent and a professional, Keith advocates for a



socially inclusive environmental design which focuses on the abilities of children rather than their disability. Keith has been heavily involved in the creation of *Angels' Landing*, a playground for children of **all** abilities.

One of Keith's current projects at the Center for Persons with Disabilities is *Beyond Access*: a project of national significance intended to develop and disseminate information, as well as provide training and technical assistance regarding inclusive outdoor play spaces for children with developmental disabilities. Supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the *Beyond Access* project provides technical assistance to both consumers and designers/manufacturers of playground equipment, using print and electronic media. The project's educational tools focus on ability rather than disability, emphasizing accessibility (physical access) as well as inclusion (social access) that contribute to children's development.

As part of that effort Keith, along with Jill Morgan (CPD), has created an introductory guide, *Inclusive Outdoor Learning Environments*. This beautifully designed guide discusses the benefits of play, and especially the benefits of free play, that is, play which occurs at the child's discretion in a play environment that is ripe with opportunity. How to design that type of outdoor play environment is what the remainder of the guide focuses on. It includes information about playground safety, accessibility, and inclusion. Playgrounds that are designed according to these guidelines will surely provide children with rich play experiences.

