



# Research UPDATE

## College of Education Utah State University

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES MAY 2003  
(435) 797-1469 • EDUC 452 • www.coe.usu.edu/brs



Dear Colleagues:

The Edith Bowen Laboratory School serves as an instructional and clinical lab setting for USU undergraduate and graduate students in elementary education and related fields as well as a laboratory setting where programmatic research in elementary education and related fields can be conducted and validated. In this issue we look at two of the innovative research programs being pursued at the Edith Bowen Laboratory School. In addition, we acknowledge the research efforts of two undergraduate students and their mentor. We recognize Tamara Ferguson for her outstanding efforts on behalf of undergraduate students, and we announce the latest multimillion dollar grant awarded to COE faculty. The exceptional research endeavors of faculty, staff, and students in the College of Education continue to be one of our greatest strengths.

Carol Strong, Associate Dean for Research



### ARTS Program Approved for Continued Funding

Kaye Rhees, principal at Edith Bowen, was the initial writer of this grant. Francine Johnson, Associate Dean for Teacher Education, is currently assisting with the grant. Tamara Ferguson,

Professor of Psychology, has been involved with the assessment and evaluation of the grant. Art mentors in the program include Jill DeVilbis, music; Jerald Tolman, visual arts; Analisa Anderson, movement/P.E; and Carmen Lopez, Spanish.

In 1997 the Emma Eccles Jones Foundation generously funded a five-year longitudinal instructional and research ARTS program at Edith Bowen Laboratory School. This past fall the Foundation approved an additional five years of funding. The goal is to continue an interdisciplinary curriculum planned and created by the arts mentors and the classroom teachers. In addition, the results of the research of the first five-year study will be used in support of a legislative study currently being done in the Salt Lake area to substantiate the importance of arts programs in the early learning years of Utah school-aged children.

The Program. During the initial funding period of the Emma Eccles Jones ARTS program over 600 children received instruction in the areas of art, music, creative movement/

physical education and Spanish. In addition, 3800 USU students participated in instruction and observation of the ARTS program. Hundreds of Northern Utah teachers, as well as national and international educators, have received in-service training or participated in conferences where Edith Bowen Lab School teachers have presented curriculum and/or research results directly related to the ARTS program.

Results. The ARTS program at Edith Bowen Lab School has had a profound effect on students. The results of the research done by the REM team from USU, a nationally recognized team of researchers, clearly show the changes in the lives of the children in a variety of ways. For example, the highest scores in academics appear during the time that the ARTS program was in place. Students now openly discuss elements of art and music that go beyond a simple mastery of these skills and that reveal their deeper appreciation and understanding of connections between the arts and more traditional academic subjects. Students have become more interested, and are performing better, in areas such as geometry and handwriting skills; they appreciate the value of their academics as a process and the need to create first drafts, second drafts, and moving toward a finished product. Life skills are being improved. For example, students are learning the importance of cooperation and friendly competition in all areas of life; they are learning to be assertive and how to resolve problems and conflicts, and they are learning how to critique the work of others, to learn from them, and to accept different perspectives.

Exposure to Spanish has broadened students' understanding of a different culture, which gives them a broader perspective of the world at large. Exposure to music has not only increased their direct knowledge base in this area, but it has helped them appreciate the beauty of the world around them, and to realize that they can succeed with effort and patience. Many students are realizing that they possess talents that they never knew they had, which boosts their confidence and self-esteem, and which allows them greater opportunities to excel. Excelling in different areas of the arts can boost the self-esteem and confidence of those children who do not excel in more traditional academic subjects.

Future Directions. The research data collected by Dr. Tamara J. Ferguson and her team has led to further questions relating to how children learn and what influence or non-influence the arts have in reading, mathematics, and language arts. For example, do children do better academically in the areas of mathematics, reading, and language arts when the arts are cultivated throughout their elementary experience? How do the arts impact students' self-efficacy, psychomotor development; and their perceptions of competence in the arts? These questions are some that will be addressed during the next five years of the ARTS program.

---

### Congratulations to Tamara Ferguson: Undergraduate Research Mentor

The Utah State University *Undergraduate Research Mentor of the Year Award* rewards excellence in involving students in scholarly research. Faculty members must demonstrate a record of mentoring undergraduates in research projects, working with students to disseminate the results through professional meetings or publications, and having an impact on students' careers as they move to graduate school or employment.

This year's College of Education awardee is Tamara Ferguson, Psychology. Professor Ferguson is not only a premiere scholar but involves undergraduates extensively in scholarly activities. Dr. Ferguson has promoted research efforts of undergraduates at national and international conferences and in publications in undergraduate research journals, as well as in premier journals in social and developmental psychology.

---

### Posters on the Hill

Kelly Douglass and Margaret Flake, two graduating psychology seniors, presented a poster at the Council on Undergraduate Research Posters on the Hill in Washington, D.C. on April 1, 2003. Their poster, showing data from the Utah Frontiers Project, was one of sixty undergraduate research posters that were displayed.

The Utah Frontiers Project, housed in the Early Intervention Research Institute of the CPD, provides services by a "team" that may include persons from agencies as well as informal supports in the community. The informal supports may be a neighbor, a Scout leader, or other person the child looks up to. Parents help choose the team and the intervention goals, and so participate in supplying the appropriate interventions.

Kelly and Margaret worked with Glenna Boyce, who, along with Jim Akers, works as a research evaluator of the project.

---

COE Research Council: Jim Dorward • Nick Eastmond • Rich Gordin • Grace Huerta • Randy Jones • Richard Roberts • Julie Smart • Carol Strong • Karl White



### Edith Bowen Teaches First Amendment: Rights, Respect, Responsibility

Almost weekly, U.S. citizens read in newspapers or see on television reports of incidents—international, national, and local—where our freedoms seem in jeopardy. Current trends are alarming and the future promises an ever-increasing number of complex pressures and decisions for everyone, especially our children. The faculty of Edith Bowen Elementary School has begun to focus their efforts on the guiding principles of the First Amendment to the Constitution to help their students acquire a "common bond" and begin to understand that their rights are linked to them being responsible and respectful citizens.

Over 100 First Amendment proposals were submitted to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the First Amendment Center for review. Edith Bowen was one of 11 schools nationwide which was awarded a three-year \$36,000 grant. Although 11 schools received this national award, only three were elementary schools. Funding from this grant provides Edith Bowen faculty First Amendment training in Washington, DC and opportunities to enhance their school's curriculum on First Amendment principles.

---

### COE Faculty Among Winners of Early Reading First Grants

Ray Reutzell, director of the Emma Eccles Jones Center for Early Childhood Education, John Smith and Parker Fawson, associate professors in the Elementary Education Department along with Tom Shuster of Spectrum Consulting, and in collaboration with the Puerto Rico Department of Education, have been awarded a \$3.27 million Early Reading First grant to help prepare preschoolers on the island to enter kindergarten and succeed in school. A Reading First grant (K-3) for a six-year total of approximately \$200 million has also been submitted and is currently under review.

The Early Reading First grant is among the first group of awards from the Bush administration's new Early Reading First program. It was rated sixth best of some 750 submitted. The goal of this grant is to ensure that children—especially those from low-income families—start school with essential language, cognitive, and early reading skills.