



The Siskin Center for Child and Family Research

committed to advancing the engagement, independence
and social relationships of children with special needs

www.siskinresearch.org



The Siskin Center for Child and Family Research

Leading research and sharing knowledge about early childhood development and special education

We are proud to announce the expansion of our services for children with special needs, their families and the professionals who support them. The Siskin Center for Child and Family Research — led by Robin McWilliam, Ph.D., internationally known for his work with children — will conduct high-quality applied research on topics related to early childhood development and special education. A significant portion of the research conducted will focus on children with developmental and behavioral disabilities including cerebral palsy, Down syndrome and other genetic conditions, autism, challenging behaviors and functional problems. Goals of the center include identifying innovative methods of intervention, developing the tools needed to replicate results, and sharing the knowledge gained with families, social service providers, educators and other caregivers for the improved quality of life of children everywhere.

Commitment to collaboration

Solid partnerships are the cornerstone of the center's commitment to encourage collaboration and the dissemination of acquired knowledge. Currently, the center's researchers have established partnerships with Vanderbilt University, the University of Florida, the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Middle Tennessee State University. Additional partnerships are expected. In addition, other researchers will be encouraged to visit the Institute to collaborate on short- and long-term studies.

More than research: Related efforts

In addition to building a portfolio of funded research, the center will

- Conduct Routines-Based Certification Institutes for social service practitioners and educators
- Provide consultation, training and technical assistance in homes and educational settings
- Collaborate on statewide initiatives, advocacy efforts and standards development
- Serve as a training site for new researchers
- Participate in local and statewide early childhood initiatives
- Establish essential local services for parents and professionals based on proven research
- Coordinate think-tanks and other partnerships that enable knowledge to be shared quickly and efficiently

A unique atmosphere

The center's wide range of research topics will be studied in natural environments within the community, including family's homes, recreation environments and educational facilities. One of the unique features of the center is that it has immediate access to the Institute's two Siskin Early Learning Centers – inclusive environments where more than 300 children of all abilities age 6 weeks to 6 years learn and play side by side.



World-class research. Worldwide impact.

Current studies

Current studies focus on a variety of topics related to the engagement, independence and social relationships of children birth to the age of six.

- TEIDS Plus: Integrating professional development and data-based decision making to enhance IFSP quality, utilization, and child and family outcomes (in collaboration with the University of Florida, Middle Tennessee State University and Vanderbilt University)
- Receipt of feedback by early childhood teachers and its relationship to use of recommended practices
- The Engagement Classroom
- Promoting social interaction among three-year-olds with autism using Video Self-Modeling
- Promoting gross motor development among children with physical disabilities
- Response-to-support framework for individualizing home-based early intervention
- Replacing picture symbols with self-modeling photos in visual schedules
- Measurement of Engagement, Independence, and Social Relationships (MEISR)

Additional areas of focus

- Challenging behaviors
- Classroom interventions
- Integrated therapy, including consultations in classrooms
- Home visiting
- Incidental teaching and teaching styles
- Parent support
- Quality of life in families of young children with disabilities
- The Routines-Based Interview
- Other topics related to children with autism and other specific disabilities



**“This new center will develop
a national reputation
for excellence through its
ground-breaking research
to improve the lives
of children and their families.”**

— Craig H. Kennedy, PhD, BCBA
Chair, Special Education Department
Professor, Special Education and Pediatrics
Director, Kennedy Center Behavior Analysis Clinic
Vanderbilt University

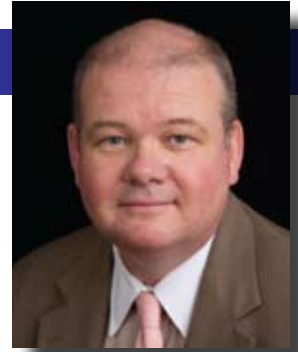
Learn more at
www.siskinresearch.org
423.648.1792

Established Experts in the Research Community: Meet the research team

ROBIN McWILLIAM, PH.D.

The Siskin Endowed Chair of Research in Early Childhood Education, Development and Intervention and Director of the Siskin Center for Child and Family Research

Dr. McWilliam has an established reputation as one of the world's leading researchers in the fields of child engagement and early intervention in natural environments. His findings and tools for implementation are best practices used by a variety of states and countries, including Australia and Portugal, which are focused on replicating his successes regarding child engagement. He is a professor in the Graduate Studies Division of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's College of Health, Education and Professional Studies. Dr. McWilliam has directed research efforts at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center at the University of North Carolina and most recently at the Center for Child Development at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital. He served as division chief for developmental and behavioral pediatrics at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine, where he was a tenured professor of pediatrics. He held a secondary appointment as a professor of special education at Vanderbilt's Peabody College. He is the immediate past president of the Division for Research of the Council for Exceptional Children and a former editor of the *Journal of Early Intervention*. Dr. McWilliam received his Ph.D. in Education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is the editor of *Rethinking Pullout Services in Early Intervention: A Professional Resource*, the author of *Family-Centered Intervention Planning: A Routines-Based Approach* and the co-author of *Engagement of Every Child in the Preschool Classroom*.



TOM BUGGEY, PH.D.

The Siskin Endowed Chair of Excellence in Early Childhood Special Education at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Tom Buggy, Ph.D., is one of the world's leading researchers in the Video Self-Modeling technique, which is currently being studied as a tool to improve social and language skills in children with autism. For the past six years, Dr. Buggy has worked as a consultant on the School Improvement Grant with the state Department of Education, which has been spearheading the Response to Intervention initiative in Tennessee. He is a faculty member in the College of Health, Education and Professional Studies at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and serves on the editorial board of the journal *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*. For 14 years, Dr. Buggy was a professor at the University of Memphis and served as the project director of RISE, Make a Difference and Project Memphis. He received his Ph.D. in Early Intervention from Pennsylvania State University.



AMY M. CASEY, PH.D.

Research Scientist

Dr. Casey worked with Dr. McWilliam for six years securing grants and conducting research at Vanderbilt University. She recently earned her Ph.D. in Early Childhood Special Education from Vanderbilt. Dr. Casey's primary research focus is providing effective performance feedback to educators and promoting child engagement. She has been published in a variety of scholarly journals, served as an instructor and supervisor of special education teachers, and won several research and scholarly awards, including a Research Scientist Award for her doctoral training from the National Institutes of Health. She is the newsletter editor for the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Research and serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Special Education*. Dr. Casey is the co-author of the book *Engagement of Every Child in the Preschool Classroom*.



Impact at a glance

Conducting high-quality research in real-world environments produces tangible results that, when implemented, help solve specific problems and provide answers to everyday challenges.

Children receive cutting-edge interventions, education and therapies, helping them be engaged at the most sophisticated level possible, function independently, communicate well and get along with others

Parents have access to parenting and education best practices, enhancing their family's quality of life

Educators can participate in research and use findings to base educational practices and new methods of teaching on data

Researchers around the globe can partner with the center for short- or long-term studies

Community and state agencies can collaborate with the center to bring the community research-based best practices and benefit from the creation of much-needed, innovative programs for children and families

Students of doctoral programs can learn about specific interventions through rotations at the Institute

State departments look to our center for guidance on early intervention and preschool services

Universities collaborate with the center on research, graduate training and service projects



Child Engagement



Video Self-Modeling



Teacher Feedback



Siskin Children's Institute

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About the Institute

Siskin Children's Institute is dedicated to serving children with special needs, their families and the professionals who touch their lives. Siskin Early Learning Centers educate children with disabilities – including autism, developmental delays and Down syndrome – and typically developing children side by side. The Siskin Center for Outreach and Adult Education offers families, educators and healthcare professionals training and support through a variety of educational resources, training opportunities, community outreach programs and consultation services. The Institute is expanding its services with the recent creation of the Siskin Center for Child and Family Research. And in 2009, the Institute plans to open the Siskin Center for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics to offer assessment, diagnosis and treatment.