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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
CEHD COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
 + HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

ICI INSTITUTE *on*
 COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

Ensuring that all children, youth, and adults with disabilities, and those receiving educational supports, are valued by and contribute to their communities of choice.

AUGUST 2019

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FEATURE STORIES

MNLEND Fellow Becomes a Special Education Director at Minneapolis Public Schools



The Minneapolis Public Schools have chosen Deeqaifrah (“Deeqa”) Hussein (MNLEND Fellow, 2017–18) as a Special Education Director. She credits many people and organizations for helping her get the position, including her husband Abdi Hussein (MNLEND Fellow, 2016–17) and family (she has two children with autism); the University of St. Thomas where she is earning her doctorate in in Educational Leadership and Learning; her internship at the Minneapolis Public Schools with Rochelle Cox, Executive Director of Special Education and Health (and Hussein’s new supervisor); and the student/family advocacy skills she learned as a MNLEND Fellow. Hussein spent the past two years as an Autism Itinerant Teacher, and for two years before that she was a High School Special Education Resource Teacher. Going into her 14th year in education, she is now one of four Special Education Directors in Minneapolis who report to the district’s Executive Director. Each Special Education Director covers a different portfolio of schools, and Executive Director Cox oversees the entire department. Hussein brings both a professional and personal mission to her task.

When her eldest son, Ayub, who is now 11, was diagnosed with autism, she changed careers from being a teacher in general education to special education. She later learned that another son, Asad, now 7, was on the spectrum. “Being a parent of children with autism informs every decision I make as a teacher. The students I work with are just like my own children. Advocating for their needs is the

greatest accomplishment a teacher could ask for. When our students thrive in the general education classroom, it is rewarding for us. We celebrate their gains while we accommodate their needs. Being a parent gave me the inside scoop of what family and home life is like for my students. It also gave me the advocacy skills and the educational training to fight for my children in the school district. I have the benefit for working for one district while my children attend a different district. I compare different programs and adapt and adjust for the next service that my students, as well as my children, should access.”

“I belong to many organizations and the fellowship taught me the benefit of cross-organizational networking; the autism community is well connected and MNLEND trains parents to seek equitable services for their loved ones,” says Hussein. Formally known as the [Minnesota Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Program](#), MNLEND is a center at ICI that prepares future leaders—known as Fellows—who will serve children with autism and other neurodevelopmental and related disabilities, and their families, in healthcare, education, human services, and policy settings. “I honed my advocacy skills while expanding my lens from parent and educator to a leadership perspective where I now think about improving the quality of life of children and families with disabilities through person-centered planning. I connected with other parents, doctors, speech and language pathologists, and other professionals I wouldn’t have met otherwise. I shared my own experience and benefited from the experiences of other fellows. The program combines families, educators, doctors, and experts in the field and trains them in leadership. And by listening to families, professionals learn to serve with humility and compassion. I have focused on my students’ quality of life and my own children’s trajectory of educational opportunities as they navigate through society. And I appreciate the diversity inclusion that MNLEND/ICI programming is extending to our communities of color.”

Check & Connect Approaches New School Year with Range of Supports for Student Engagement



Staff of ICI’s [Check & Connect](#) K–12 student engagement program have been busy this summer preparing and sharing resources that will help educators identify early signs of student disengagement with school and learning, and intervene to keep students on track with their education. Check & Connect, which began at ICI in 1990, is an evidence-based student engagement intervention that has at its core a trusting relationship between the student and a caring, trained mentor who both advocates for the student and challenges the student to keep education salient. Of the dropout prevention interventions reviewed by the U.S. Department of Education’s [What Works Clearinghouse](#), Check & Connect is the only program found to have strong evidence of positive effects on staying in school. Among the many supports for student engagement offered by Check & Connect are the following:

- Check & Connect’s biennial conference. The [2019 National Student Engagement Conference: Solutions for Success](#), was held July 24–25 on the University of Minnesota

campus. Approximately 140 attendees participated in this event focused on best practices for keeping struggling K–12 students engaged and in school. The presentations will be posted on the Check & Connect website in the next few weeks. “It was great to see so many educators from across the country and around the world together with a shared goal of increasing student engagement at school and with learning. I look forward to the upcoming school year and our next conference in 2021!” says Check & Connect Program Director [Eileen Klemm](#). The call for papers and registration information for that conference will be available in early 2021.

- In 2018–19 Check & Connect provided training and technical assistance to more than 1,300 individuals affiliated with educational and other youth-serving organizations to support their implementation of the model across the U.S and internationally. It also delivered train-the-trainer workshops and consultation in collaboration with state education agencies in seven states that are using the program statewide: Georgia, Iowa, Missouri, Washington, Utah, Pennsylvania, and Florida. A wide array of [on-demand training opportunities](#) will be offered this year for an anticipated 1000+ participants at local, district, and state level sites.
- The Check & Connect team is expanding training opportunities for the upcoming year to include the [Engage SEI Online Student Engagement Instrument](#), released in spring 2019. Engage SEI measures what students think and feel about school, delivering a survey via an online platform and providing data for educators to use to identify early warning signs of disengagement and develop personalized interventions. The instrument is available for purchase, and the purchase price includes onboarding assistance, the Digital Implementation Guide and training resources, and application maintenance and troubleshooting for one year.

ICI Fellows Help Make Religious Schools More Inclusive

Mosques and Dugsi (weekend religious schools for Muslim youth) are cornerstones among Somali communities in Minnesota, but ICI Diversity Fellows [Ashwak Hassan](#) and [Sheyhan Gelle](#) noticed there were challenges in some Dugsi in fully including children with disabilities. As in many communities, some members traditionally view disability and mental health issues negatively, rather than part of natural human diversity. This stigma isolated some individuals and families from community gathering places, notably the local mosque and/or Dugsi.



Gelle and Hassan met with a parent of two children with autism who was already addressing the situation by starting a volunteer project to help children and families with neurodevelopmental disabilities access an inclusive Dugsi he designed in suburban Minneapolis. He created adaptive learning tools and techniques of teaching the Quran, the Islamic sacred book, to children. He uses pictures and color-coded text to teach children prayer. His actions and commitment to inclusion inspired Hassan and Gelle to design a [Diversity Disability Fellowship](#) project to start what they call the Al-Rahman (“compassion and kindness”) Center for Muslims with disabilities and their community partners, aiming to enlarge the

support network among the various east African and Muslim communities in the metro area. The family-oriented Center will allow the Fellows to continue listening and learning from parents who improve inclusion and awareness.

“Our project started a community dialogue on social stigma and disability, discussing inclusion and acceptance of disability through awareness and tying this work to the deeply-rooted Islamic belief in compassionate and merciful action,” says Hassan (MNLEND Fellow, 2015–16), a family and child mental health specialist who worked on ICI’s Learn the Signs Act Early project. “This year we tackled difficult subjects, such as notions of ‘cause,’ stigmas, fears, misinformation, and discussed openly how the discomfort of congregants may prevent people with disabilities being meaningfully and holistically engaged in the local Mosque communities. Dugsi teachers and faith leaders spoke with us and their members about inclusion and accessibility. Misunderstanding is compounded by the fact that each disability diagnosis brings its own unique challenges and strengths for the individuals, their families, and the greater community. We connected one-on-one with many metro area Imams (faith leaders) and Dugsi teachers to discuss our Center and to gather social capital and support among their congregants. We also held multiple workshops and meetings with the larger Muslim community during community events. We listened as Muslim families of children with disabilities told their stories and discussed what they wanted for their children.”

Hassan and Gelle have advice for others trying to reach underserved communities.

“Building trust and then teaching about inclusion takes time and sensitivity to cultural beliefs and values. Look for creative ways to marry your passion for social inclusion for people with disabilities to the strong and positive values within the cultural group. For example, we did this during the holy month of Ramadan by going to numerous Mosques, community cultural events, and Dugsi sites; that way, we reached hundreds of community members. By doing so, you can begin to change the social and cultural landscape for the people you care deeply about.”

ICI Assists with Self-Determination for Wisconsin Students with IDD

[Renáta Tichá](#) and [Brian Abery](#) (pictured), in collaboration with principal investigator [Satomi Shinde](#) from the University of Wisconsin—River Falls, have received \$96,000 in funding from the Tommy G. Thompson Center on Public Leadership for a one-year grant entitled, [Improving the Self-Determination of Students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in Wisconsin](#).

Tichá and Abery, who are the project's subaward principal investigator and subaward co-principal investigator, respectively, will work with Shinde to develop an education and technical assistance program for middle and high school teachers in 10 schools (five middle schools and five high schools) in Wisconsin, providing them with strategies to support self-determination among their students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). “This project offers us the opportunity to apply what we have learned about self-



determination over the last 15 years of working with adults with IDD to a younger group in the hopes of supporting their transition from school to work and inclusive community living,” says Abery. Tichá and Shinde were fellow PhD students in the Special Education program at the University of Minnesota a decade ago. “This presents an opportunity to reconnect in an area of common interest of supporting special and general education teachers to incorporate self-determination into their daily inclusive teaching practice,” says Tichá. The University of Wisconsin—River Falls is the lead institution on this project.

Assessing Post-School Outcomes for Indiana Students with Disabilities

ICI's [Systems Improvement Group](#) (SIG) was recently awarded a two-year, \$150,000 grant from the Indiana Department of Education to conduct the state's post-school outcomes survey of students with disabilities. The [Indicator 14 Postschool Follow-Up Survey](#) will gather information on youth with disabilities who are no longer in secondary school and had an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in place at the time of leaving school. “The survey will assess the extent to which these students are enrolled in postsecondary education within one year of leaving school, are competitively employed, or are employed in some other training program,” says project director [Maureen Hawes](#) (pictured). “The data gathered through this survey is used to respond to federal reporting requirements and to target resources to support students as they transition out of secondary school.”



The Systems Improvement Group is comprised of technical assistance professionals who have provided technical assistance to state and local education agencies across the U.S. to support their efforts in demonstrating accountability with federal requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Over the past four years, SIG has conducted the Part B data collection requirement for the Indiana Department of Education for Indicator 14. [Michael Sharpe](#) and [Tri Tran](#) are also part of the project staff.

Building Early Childhood Provider Capacity in Minnesota's Latino Community

“I provide monthly early childhood development trainings, including early signs and disability supports and services, in Spanish to the Latino community of almost 300 in-home childcare providers network,” says [Faviola Estrada](#) (pictured), who, along with [Ruth Evangelista](#), co-founded [La](#)



[Red Latina de Educación Temprana](#) (The Latino Early Childcare Provider Network) in 2013. La Red is a community-based organization that provides tools, capacity, and leadership development for Latino childcare providers in Minnesota to deliver quality childcare, and thus support the health of their families and community. Trainings run the gamut from First Aid, nutrition, and physical activity to healthy early childhood development, school literature, and support for children with special needs. Estrada, Evangelista, and La Red colleague [Carolina De La Rosa Mateo](#) are all Diversity Fellows supported by the [Research and Training Center on Community Living Diversity Fellowships](#), which ICI launched last year to (1) increase the knowledge and capacity of disability within community-based organizations that serve diverse and/or underrepresented families, and (2) inform ICI about how to increase staff/trainee diversity, support underserved individuals and families, and better serve diverse communities. The fellowship is part of ICI's efforts expand the diversity of its staff and stakeholders, and to address the professional and educational disparities experienced by Minnesota's historically underrepresented communities.

Health inequities begin at an early age and children's early experiences are deeply connected to their future physical, cognitive, and social development. La Red serves family, friend, and neighbor childcare (FFN) providers—the most common form of care for infants and toddlers. In Minnesota, nearly 40 percent of children age 2 and younger and 25 percent of children age 3 to 5 are estimated to be primarily in FFN care. Families often choose FFN because it is a culturally appropriate model of care, and they want someone they know and trust watching over their children. However, FFN care lacks support services; most resources are aimed at formal/licensed child care centers and at parents. La Red works to overcome the systemic barriers that FFN childcare providers face by providing members with quality trainings, educational opportunities, and leadership development. Those trainings include early childhood development, building equitable health outcomes for people experiencing the greatest inequities and for future generations. The organization also creates a space for FFN providers to connect and support each other, build community, and increase social cohesion. Moreover, La Red advocates for family rights, organizing and mobilizing network members around policies and community-based solutions. "All of us together; we bring ideas, organize, and provide a healthier life for our children," says Estrada.

The Fellowship director is [Jennifer Hall-Lande](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Featured on [ICI's Facebook](#) on August 6, 2019

[Amy Hewitt](#) presents findings from the Family & Individual Needs for Disability Support (FINDS) report at the [IASSIDD](#) World Congress in Glasgow, Scotland. To learn more about this report, visit <https://ici.umn.edu/products/view/989 #Future4All>

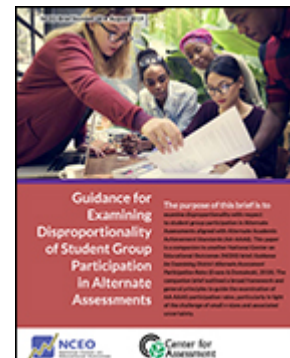


NEW RELEASES

NCEO Brief 18: Guidance for Examining Disproportionality of Student Group Participation in Alternate Assessments

Authors: [Carla M. Evans](#) and [Chris Domaleski](#)

[This brief](#) examines disproportionality with respect to student group participation in Alternate Assessments aligned with Alternate Academic Achievement Standards (AA-AAAS). It is a companion to the NCEO brief, *Guidance for Examining District Alternate Assessment Participation Rates*. The current brief provides a more detailed examination and illustration of a particular issue, disproportionality. The companion brief outlined a broad framework and general principles to guide the examination of AA-AAAS participation rates, particularly in light of the challenge of small n-sizes and associated uncertainty. It begins by reviewing the framework with respect to its application to address disproportionality in participation in the alternate assessment aligned to alternate academic achievement standards. This is followed by an illustration of specific analytic steps, and concludes by providing guidance for further inquiry that links back to the guiding principles in the framework. Published by ICI's National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO).



FSRTC Research Brief 2: Caregiver Differences Across Race and Ethnicity

Author: [Lynda Anderson](#)

[This brief](#) examines caregivers' self-reported mental, physical, or financial strain. The researchers analyzed data from the 2015 Caregiving in the U.S. survey. The purpose of this brief was to look at self-reported



caregiver outcome differences across race and ethnicity. Researchers found that caregivers were most likely to be caring for children, parents or siblings. White caregivers were more likely to be older than 50 than were other caregivers. Latino caregivers were the youngest of the caregiver groups. White caregivers were more likely to be caring for a spouse, while Latino caregivers were more likely to be caring for some other family member (such as a grandparent). Caregivers across all groups were more likely to provide supports for instrumental activities of daily living such as helping with finances or shopping than activities of daily living such as helping with hygiene. Most caregivers lived apart from the person they supported and provided supports fewer than 20 hours per week. Caregivers across all races and ethnicities reported similar levels of physical and financial strain related to caregiving. White caregivers reported somewhat more emotional strain than did other caregiver groups. Published by the Family Support Research & Training Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago and ICI's Research and Training Center on Community Living.

EVENTS

Screenings of *Invaluable: The Unrecognized Profession of Direct Support*



[September 5: NADSP Conference, Cleveland, OH](#)

[October 11: The Arc National Convention, Washington, DC](#)

[October 22: The Council on Quality and Leadership \(CQL\) Conference, Baltimore, MD](#)

[*Invaluable: The Unrecognized Profession of Direct Support*](#) is a documentary film by ICI's Research and Training Center on Community Living that explores the underappreciated and underfunded work of direct support professionals (DSPs), the people who support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in living full lives as members of their communities. The film is being screened at various conferences and locations around the country.

Through stories and interviews with DSPs, family members, advocates, and people with disabilities from across the country, the film honors the complexity of the work and the immense value it provides to individuals receiving support. And it asks us to take action now in strengthening the DSP workforce before the system collapses. The film is also [available for purchase and rental.](#)

5th Annual Minnesota Gathering for Person-Centered Practices

September 24–25

Eagan Community Center

**1501 Central Parkway
Eagan, Minnesota**



The Minnesota Gathering for Person-Centered Practices is an annual two-day event for individuals with disabilities and their family members, advocates, business partners, and educational and community-based organizations who are interested in person-centered practices. The purpose of the Gathering is to create connections, dialog, share successes, and learn together how to keep moving Minnesota toward being a person-centered place for people with disabilities to live. This year the Gathering celebrates its fifth anniversary and honors how Minnesota has advanced person-centered practices around the state. [Registration is open.](#)

STAFF UPDATES



Rebecca Dosch Brown and **Jennifer Hall-Lande**: On July 18–19, [Dosch Brown](#) and [Hall-Lande](#) participated and presented at the 2019 Autism CARES grantee meeting in Washington, DC. Dosch Brown was a plenary panelist on "Looking Forward, Meeting the Challenges Ahead," where she explained how MNLEND recruited, retained, mentored, and trained Fellows from underrepresented racial, ethnic, cultural, disability, and linguistic communities, and across the 16+ LEND-represented disciplines. Hall-Lande presented, "Autism Spectrum Disorders in Diverse Communities," about the MN-ADDM project; and "Building a Network of Community Leaders to Support Early Developmental Screening," about the Minnesota Act Early project.

Kelly Nye-Lengerman and **Martha Thurlow**: On July 22, [Nye-Lengerman](#) and [Thurlow](#) presented, "Strategies for Meeting Requirements for Alternate Assessments and WIOA," at the OSEP Leadership Conference in Washington, DC.

Chet Tschetter and **MacDonald Metzger**: On July 22–24, [Tschetter](#) and [Metzger](#) presented, "The Critical Line: Supporting Frontline Supervisors," at The Arc Summer Leadership Institute in Charleston, South Carolina.



Heidi Eschenbacher: On July 23, [Eschenbacher](#) presented Residential Information Systems Project (RISP) data for an invited presentation to the IACC Workshop on Addressing the Housing Needs of People on the Autism Spectrum in Rockville, Maryland.

Macdonald Metzger: On July 23, the U.S. Department of State selected [Metzger](#) for the Spring



2019 Professional Fellows Program on Inclusive Disability Employment (PFP-IDE)—Outbound Fellow Award. The PFP-IDE is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs through the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD). The program supports 20 mid-career professionals (Fellows) from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, who are committed to advancing inclusive employment for individuals with disabilities. The PFP-IDE outbound fellowship award will support Metzger to travel to Kenya to help Daniel Chege (who visited ICI in the spring) implement his project, "Creating a Microenterprise Hub for Inclusive Economic Empowerment." Chege is Vice Chairperson of Murera Persons with Disability Welfare Association, a community-based organization in Kenya that enables its members, who are people with disabilities, to become self-reliant in the local economy. The microenterprise hub will provide people with disabilities in rural Kiambu County a place to rent their own shops rather than work in the current open-air market. The hub or shops will provide entrepreneurs a safe place to store their goods and also transact business with their customers.



Claire Benway, Macdonald Metzger, Nancy McCulloh, Kelly Nye-Lengerman, Laurie ("Chet") Tschetter, and Jody Van Ness: On July 31–August 1, several ICI staff members attended the Minnesota Department of Human Services' Age and Disabilities Odyssey Conference in Duluth, Minnesota. [Benway](#), [Metzger](#), [McCulloh](#), and [Tschetter](#) presented, "How to Keep Great Direct Support Professionals Using the Workforce Toolkit," at the pre-conference. During the conference, [Nye-Lengerman](#) co-presented, "Enhancing Opportunities for Employment and Community Engagement in Minnesota", "Disability Services Innovations Grants Fishbowl (and poster)", and "Waiver Re-Imagine Project: Research and Recommendation." [Van Ness](#) (pictured at right), her son Andy (center), and Andy's Direct Support Professional Darren Schweiger (left), presented "Living a Meaningful Life Using Person-Centered Practices."



Brian Abery, Amy Hewitt, David Johnson, Jerry Smith, and Renáta Tichá: On August 6–9, ICI staff members moderated breakout sessions and/or presented at the World Congress of the International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IASSIDD), 2019, in Glasgow, Scotland. [Abery](#) presented, "Outcome Measurement in the U.S. for Persons with IDD: Current Status and Development of Person-Centered Measures." [Hewitt](#) moderated breakout sessions on "Building and Sustaining a High Quality Direct Support Workforce" and "Self Direction for People with Intellectual Disabilities: What Have We Learned." She also presented, "2018 New York State Workforce Credentialing"; "National Core Indicators Staff Stability Survey Data"; "The Effects of a Competency-based Training Intervention for Direct Support Professionals on Site-level Outcomes, Learner Outcomes, and Service Recipient Outcomes"; "FINDS: Family & Individual Needs for Disability Supports Survey"; and "Implementation of Self-direction in the U.S.: Lessons and Policy Implications." [Johnson](#) moderated the breakout session, "Postsecondary Issues: Inclusive Education and Employment," and presented, "Predictors Associated with Paid Employment Status of Community and Technical College Students with IDD in

the USA.” [Smith](#) screened the film he directed, [Invaluable: The Unrecognized Profession of Direct Support](#). [Tichá](#) presented, “Progress Monitoring System for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities—MANGO.”



Laurie ("Chet") Tschetter: On August 15, the National Alliance of Direct Support Professionals (NADSP) announced [Tschetter](#) as a new board member. NADSP is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to elevate the status of direct support professionals by improving practice standards; promoting system reform; and advancing their knowledge, skills, and values.

ALUMNI UPDATE



Jennie Marcus: This spring, Marcus was appointed executive director of Copperleaf Senior Living Community in Willmar, Minnesota. The certificate that she earned from ICI's Minnesota Positive Behavior Support Initiative back in November 2014 helped prepare her for the position she holds now.

In 2014, she worked for REM River Bluffs, assisting people with intellectual disabilities, severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI), and traumatic brain injury. At that time Dakota County sponsored her certificate studies at ICI. She worked with the county to develop and implement dialectical therapy programs for people with SPMI, creating programs for parents with intellectual disabilities, a summer camp for children with intellectual disabilities, and implementation of person-centered planning and workforce integration

“My ICI experience helped me evolve to my current leadership career in senior living,” says Marcus. “My first position in this field was executive director at Brookdale Willmar, an assisted living facility for seniors. ICI sharpened my training skills, helping staff to see and experience each resident’s learning history, their likes and dislikes.”

Then came an opportunity.

“This past April brought an opportunity to accept a position with a larger community, as executive director for Vista Prairie’s Copperleaf Senior Living community in my hometown of Willmar. Since then, I have worked with our memory care manager on person-centered planning. We are fact-finding, asking families and caregivers about residents’ life stories, engagement interests, and what makes a good day and what makes a bad day. Once the surveys are complete, plans will be documented for each resident and associates will be trained. I am also working with West Central Industries on volunteerism and workforce integration for individuals with disabilities.

Her opinion about ICI's influence on her career and the people she serves?

“I am truly passionate about ICI, and the mind-shift it inspires about tailoring care to the wants and needs of each individual.”

This email was sent to ICI staff by Institute on Community Integration, 109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN, 55455, USA. The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

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