

Learning What Works

Evidence from SRDC's social experiments and research

June 2010

IN THIS ISSUE

- A new generation of workforce training programs: Career pathways
- Measuring family dynamics
- U.S. Federal Reserve chairman speaks of SRDC work
- Measuring the effectiveness of PSE access and retention programs
- Helping displaced workers: Is an earnings supplement program a viable solution?
- International review of parental leave policies
- New research program on returns to adult learning
- Better than Facebook: SRDC pilot to help graduates find careers they want
- Timely lessons for early childhood initiatives in Ontario and New-Brunswick
- SRDC staff news
- Spreading the word: SRDC's recent presentations around the country

A new generation of workforce training programs: Career pathways

There is now a growing consensus among policy makers and practitioners that in order to successfully complete occupational training programs and achieve labour market advancement, many of those seeking skills upgrading often need to improve their foundational and literacy skills first. However, while there is a wide array of programs and tools for addressing foundational skills needs, it is unclear how successful they have been in supporting transitions to further education and improving labour market prospects. Some evidence suggests that there is often a striking lack of persistence in basic skills training, such that many adult learners do not proceed to higher levels of training that can have a meaningful impact on labour market outcomes.

An innovative approach to address this lack of persistence is to design training programs as part of a sector-specific pathway of modular educational opportunities that are linked to in-demand jobs. A major innovation of this career pathways approach is that literacy and foundational skills training is offered in the context of occupational training, which accelerates learning and ensures that the transition from basic training to post-secondary education is as seamless as possible. In addition, by developing modular-based curricula with multiple entry and exit points, career pathways provide a flexible approach that is responsive to the economic realities of working-age adults.

In the fall of 2009, SRDC completed a study for the Ontario Government that explored the feasibility of implementing a career pathways approach in an Ontario context. The analysis assessed the

existing training delivery infrastructure, identifying strengths that could be built on and gaps that would need to be addressed for a successful implementation. The analysis provided strong evidence to suggest that Ontario has implemented some elements of a pathways approach but has stopped short of a comprehensive system that links in-demand occupations with integrated and transparent educational pathways. Based on the findings of the consultation exercise conducted as part of the study, the SRDC report found strong interest among Ontario stakeholders for a pilot project that would build on existing elements of the Ontario adult education system and evaluate a comprehensive career pathways approach.

SRDC is conducting a series of additional consultations with policymakers and training practitioners in several Canadian jurisdictions to explore the relevance and feasibility of innovative training programming such as the pathways approach.

[Read the report.](#)

Measuring family dynamics



The critical role of the family in child development and well-being is widely recognized across many academic disciplines, including psychology, sociology, family therapy, economics, health, and social work. The breadth of academic interest is reflected in the vast number of measures developed to assess family dynamics, the many variations in their application, and the models or theories upon which they are based. With the support of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, SRDC engaged in a study of the measurement of family dynamics to

promote a better understanding of the relationship between the current measures and child outcomes, and to identify priorities to improve the collection of data on family dynamics in Canada.

Measurement of family dynamics is done for research and for clinical purposes. In research, measures of family dynamics are collected for the statistical comparison of populations, baseline data and longitudinal studies, as well as for policy and program planning. In a clinical setting, measures may be used at intake for case assessment, for treatment planning, for measurement of changes over time and outcomes.

For the first part of the study, SRDC conducted an extensive literature search to select the most common approaches and identify their strengths and weaknesses, and to summarize the reliability and validity of the various measures. As a result, SRDC selected 12 measures (scales, questionnaires, indices, and models) of full family functioning for detailed review based on evidence-based criteria. Based on the findings from the literature review, SRDC then developed a survey for the second part of the study. Experts across disciplines were invited to respond to the survey in order to gain a fuller understanding of the measures and their application.

Responses to the survey of experts reaffirmed the findings from the literature review. There is no one clearly superior way to measure family dynamics. Experts agreed that while psychometric properties are paramount in importance, different approaches and different measures have relative

merit, depending on the research questions, population of interest, sample size, budget, and intended analyses.

The constructs that the experts felt were most important to measure for child outcomes were the ones most commonly found in the literature and generally captured by the 12 selected measures. Variations in terminology aside, these include parental warmth, communication, conflict resolution, economic well-being, parenting style/control, parental involvement, family values/community involvement, physical and mental health, and family structure/stability.

Expert opinions point to the importance of having a measure that can be reliably applied to the increasingly diverse population of Canada. Measures must be culturally appropriate, and accessible in terms of language and concepts. Although adequate measures of family dynamics exist, future work should examine not only their applicability to the broad population of interest, but the currency of their constructs given socio-cultural and economic changes and trends in the lives of Canadian families.

[Read the report.](#)

U.S. Federal Reserve chairman speaks of SRDC work

The chairman of the United States Federal Reserve, Ben Bernanke, recently referred to the work of SRDC at a University of South Carolina commencement ceremony. In his speech on “The Economics of Happiness”, he spoke of the merits of a “program in Canada” – SRDC’s Community Employment Innovation Project (CEIP). Here’s an excerpt:

But, again, many things beside income contribute to feelings of well-being. For example, as I mentioned, social interactions appear very important for individual happiness. One application of this insight – and this is just an example of the type of research connected with the “economics of happiness” that may bear policy insights – involved a program in Canada in which recipients of employment insurance or income assistance were offered jobs in community development and opportunities to develop a social network¹. Being unemployed is stressful, not just because of loss of income but also because of feelings of loss of control and diminished self-worth. But individuals who participated in these opportunities reported higher satisfaction than those who did not. Further study could shed light on the effectiveness of alternative approaches to traditional unemployment insurance programs. (The Economics of Happiness, May 8, 2010)

Mr. Bernanke mentioned CEIP with reference to a recent working paper, *Measuring and Understanding Subjective Well-Being*, co-authored by SRDC board member, John Helliwell.

CEIP was a demonstration project that tested an active re-employment strategy for unemployed individuals who volunteered to work on locally developed community projects in areas of chronic unemployment. In exchange for foregoing their employment insurance or social assistance benefits, CEIP offered participants wages to work on community projects for up to three years, giving them a significant period of stable income and an opportunity to gain work experience, acquire new skills, and expand their network of contacts. CEIP provided subsidized labour that could productively meet local needs. Communities created decision-making bodies and mobilized sponsors to develop projects that responded to these needs.

The CEIP model succeeded in promoting local cohesion, encouraging the development of social capital, and increasing socially inclusive activities in participating communities. Significant positive effects were achieved for groups served by the projects, in particular for youth, seniors, and low-income families. Another important finding was that individuals participating in community-sponsored projects engaged more in formal volunteering during and after CEIP, providing much-needed resources for local organizations and improving social inclusion among volunteers.

CEIP was conceived by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) and funded by HRSDC and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services. SRDC managed CEIP from 1999 to 2005, which involved 1,500 participants and 250 not-for-profit organizations in 6 Cape Breton communities. SRDC released CEIP final results in November 2008.

Read Ben Bernanke's speech, *The Economics of Happiness*, May 8, 2010.

Read a [summary](#) of the J. Helliwell and C. Barrington-Leigh working paper, *Measuring and Understanding Subjective Well-Being*.

Read the [CEIP final report](#).

Read the [executive summary of the CEIP final report](#).

Read [more information about CEIP](#).

1. Helliwell, John F., & Barrington-Leigh, Christopher P. (2010). *Measuring and Understanding Subjective Well-Being*, NBER Working Paper Series 15887 (Cambridge, Mass.: National Bureau of Economic Research, April).

Measuring the effectiveness of PSE access and retention programs



Educational success is not shared equally among Canadians. Youth from lower income families, Aboriginals, and those who would be first in their family to attend post-secondary education or PSE (“first-generation” students) remain under-represented on the campuses of Canada’s post-secondary institutions. Not only are under-represented groups less likely to enrol in PSE, but they are also at greater risk of leaving without completing their program.¹ Reducing the access gap is important for promoting both equality and associated community

benefits for all Canadians, as well as for ensuring a competitive labour market.

Canadian post-secondary institutions have responded to access gaps with innovative programs to recruit, enrol and graduate students from under-represented groups. These efforts reflect the core of their institutional missions to widen participation in higher education, and many of the strategies appear promising. However, as noted recently by the Organisation for Economic Co-ordination and Development (OECD) “there is little evidence about the effects of institutional support programmes on student outcomes.”² Given the importance of reducing the access gap and the scope of institutional efforts to address it, the time is right to ask if institutions have the data they need to determine whether or not initiatives are meeting their objectives.

With the support of the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, SRDC recently completed a study on the data-readiness of PSE access and retention programs for lower-income youth, Aboriginals, and first-generation students. The study methodology included an environmental scan followed by site visits to universities and colleges to learn more from institutional researchers and program delivery staff about the data they collect, access and use to support delivery and evaluation of their access initiatives for under-represented students.

The study by SRDC principal research associate, Sheila Currie, found numerous examples of innovative access and retention programs for under-represented groups at Canadian post-secondary institutions. Equally impressive was the demonstrated commitment of institution staff and community partners, and institutional willingness to evolve so that students from all backgrounds can feel they belong on their campuses. The study findings indicate, however, that institutions likely do not have the data required to fully assess the effectiveness of their access and retention programs for under-represented students. Data gaps result from challenges, including

- a lack of consistent definitions for under-represented groups, resulting in incomparability over time and across institutions and jurisdictions;
- difficulties identifying the target groups, including the potential reluctance to self-identify especially at sensitive points in the student cycle;
- the inability to access or link datasets due to a lack of common identifiers and limitations imposed by the regulatory environment;
- a lack of outcome measures and longitudinal data;
- a lack of adequate resources to collect and analyze data.

Staff at partner institutions clearly showed both their determination to put the available data to the best use, and their desire to improve their data-readiness in order to rigorously evaluate and continually improve their access strategies.

The findings point to three main considerations that should be of interest for all who wish to reduce the access gap. The first is that, in addition to developing and implementing innovative programs and strategies, improving access for and retention of under-represented students in Canadian PSE also requires a commitment to evaluating the impacts of these investments. The institutional vision and objectives are clearly articulated by leadership and communicated within the institution and to community partners.

A second consideration is to put in place a purposeful and coordinated strategy, based on input from stakeholder groups and including elements of systematic data collection, standardized questions and centralized data collection. In the United States, the Education Trust has launched an ambitious project to close the access and completion gaps between low-income and minority students and other students. The initiative brings colleges together as they each work to achieve their own overall improvement targets, with agreement to use a common set of metrics to evaluate progress. In Canada, the first steps toward creating a similar national strategy might include the creation of a task force with membership from provincial/federal, national, PSE institutional and educational leaders whose purpose it would be to hold broad consultations to begin articulating a national data strategy.

A third area for consideration is to support investment in institutional infrastructure. This would involve increased support for program delivery staff, who often have little time or human resource capacity to implement rigorous evaluations of program outcomes. Funding for a dedicated administrative position, or staff, within the institution is another way of building infrastructure to promote access and retention initiatives.

Read the [report](#).

Read the [literature review](#).

1. Clement, J. 2008. "University Attainment of the Registered Indian Population, 1981–2001: A Cohort Approach." *Horizons* 10 (1).

2. Santiago, P., K. Tremblay, E. Basri, and E. Arnal. 2008. *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society, Volume 2*. Paris: OECD.

Helping displaced workers: Is an earnings supplement program a viable solution?

On March 12, SRDC president, Jean-Pierre Voyer, participated in an expert roundtable on policies for displaced workers organized by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). His presentation focused on what was learned from an SRDC demonstration project, the Earnings Supplement Project (ESP), which took place in Canada in the mid-1990s thanks to the sponsorship of HRSDC. SRDC implemented and evaluated the project, which tested an innovative approach to help displaced workers reintegrate the labour market faster. SRDC also aimed to determine whether or not such an approach would be appropriate in today's context to address problems faced by displaced workers.

ESP provided a financial incentive to encourage unemployed people to return to work more quickly than they otherwise would. ESP offered eligible recipients of employment insurance (EI), a temporary supplement to their earnings if they experienced a reduction in earnings when they left EI to go back to work. Supplements were calculated to make up 75 per cent of the difference between earnings prior to EI and earnings in the new job.

Although results of the experiment showed that the approach made a difference in accelerating return to work, the impact was rather small. While participating displaced workers showed a strong interest in the supplement offer, few ended up benefiting from the offer (2 of 10 participants), reflecting perhaps the difficulties participants had in finding new employment. Indeed, the first condition to qualify for the supplement was to find a job. Six out of ten program group members did not find a job in time (within 26 weeks) to qualify for the supplement. Mr. Voyer commented that if earnings supplements were offered in a labour market environment where there were few jobs available, even low paying jobs, then the chances of success of such a policy were likely to be slim.

Are there reasons to believe that results would be different 15 years later? According to Mr. Voyer, it is hard to tell. The Canadian economy was doing well during the time the ESP experiment took place (1995-1996) and the average unemployment rate compared fairly well with today's unemployment situation. However, Canada is seeing a period where labour shortages are expected to be a feature of the labour market for at least a couple of decades, due to the aging population. All things being equal, labour market conditions should be favourable in coming years and make it easier for displaced workers to find new employment and make use of earnings supplements.

ESP clearly indicated that government should not expect major changes from the introduction of such a program to reduce the duration of unemployment or unemployment benefits. However, if the main policy objective is to provide financial compensation to displaced workers who have to bear a disproportionately higher share of the costs of economic adjustment, then a program of earnings supplements may be successful if it is well targeted and offered with job search assistance services.

Mr. Voyer complemented his presentation with examples of other changes to the EI system that could be considered to help address issues associated with displacement.

Read the [notes of the presentation](#).

International review of parental leave policies



SRDC was selected by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to conduct a review of domestic and international research and policy literature on existing parental leave policies and their impacts. The report, authored by Jennifer Robson, describes the development and up-to-date details on parental leave policies in Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and Canada (with attention to the unique features of Quebec's provincial

parental insurance program). The report highlighted the impacts of these policies on children, parents, and employers.

Access and uptake of maternity and parental leave seems to be associated with better infant outcomes (like infant mortality, immunization, and certain developmental milestones). Available research does not isolate the effects of leave from the effects of the quality of care received, but it suggests that the best outcomes are seen among children of better educated mothers.

When combined with widespread access to private and public child care, maternity and parental leave appear to be beneficial for employment among women. When benefits are very low or absent, women are likely to return to work quickly or to exit the workforce altogether, particularly if they are lower-wage workers.

There is little evidence regarding the impact of leave policies on family functioning. Families with higher levels of income and education are more likely to take longer leave, or any leave among fathers, when the leave period is associated with a meaningfully high level of benefits to replace the wages lost. This effect is less evident in families with low or modest incomes.

Offering parental leave to parents is likely to be neutral for employers at worst and may even be somewhat positive given the high costs of employee turn-over.

There is no evidence of adjustments to either labour market participation or fertility decisions (both overall and in terms of timing) to suggest that policies encourage births or labour market exits. Qualitative research does show that women consider access to EI benefits among other factors in making plans about pregnancy, but the economic research finds no measurable evidence of a behavioural effect. Women may overestimate the degree to which access to benefits alters their behaviour.

Research on uptake of paternity leave and employer practices suggests that policy may have an important signalling effect on both of these actors. In the absence of proscriptive policy, fathers and employers exhibit a pattern of relatively rare uptake of leave for parental care giving.

The final section of the report discusses gaps in the research and proposes areas for future policy-relevant research.

Read the [report](#).

Read the [slide presentation](#).

New research program on returns to adult learning



In February 2010, SRDC brought together a multi-disciplinary group of experts from across Canada for a one-day workshop on adult learning. The workshop was the official launch of the Returns to Adult Learning Research Program, a three-year collaboration between SRDC and the Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network (CLSRN).

The program is motivated by the finding that despite a strong case for benefits of lifelong learning as a cornerstone for growth, prosperity, and social cohesion, a large percentage of Canadian adults still do not possess the minimum level of skills needed in a knowledge-based economy. This figure has barely changed in 10 years. How can more adults be encouraged to upgrade their skills? Which types of adult education and training work best for what types of adult learners under which types of circumstances? More fundamental, how do we measure the benefits of adult learning?

The Returns to Adult Learning Research Program has three objectives:

- develop and test a comprehensive theoretical, analytical, and methodological framework for understanding and measuring economic and non-economic impacts of learning;
- use this framework to conduct empirical research and address policy relevant research questions, such as who should invest in adult learning activities, what is the relative role of governments, firms, and individuals in fostering these investments, and what are best practices for adults with low education or low skills;
- identify data needs for future research and support the development of future Canadian surveys.

In broader terms, the program will serve several purposes. It will estimate the performance of education and training systems in generating adult learning opportunities and producing required competencies. It will assess the impact of these competencies on social and economic outcomes at individual and aggregated levels. Finally, it will help to clarify the policy levers that could contribute to strengthening competencies.

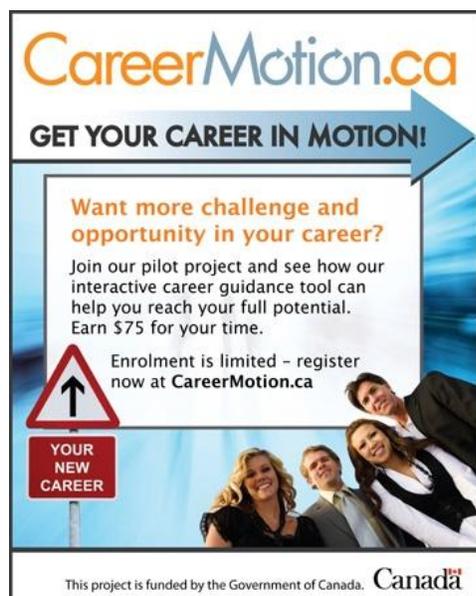
The program will use a number of methodologies, including environmental scans, literature reviews, framework development, and empirical analysis to estimate economic and social returns to adult learning. The research program will be informed by the latest expertise in the field and will also build capacity by engaging new researchers. Internal and academic peer review and the ongoing involvement of policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders will ensure academic excellence and policy relevance of the research.

The program is co-led by Karen Myers, SRDC senior research associate, and Arthur Sweetman, McMaster University and CLSRN lead representative on the program. A core multidisciplinary research team is made up of several scholars: Kjell Rubenson and Richard Desjardins (University of British Columbia), Scott Murray (consultant), Mina Piesca (University of Gueph), Lisa Kaida (University of Toronto), Marc Frenette (Statistics Canada), Brigid Hayes (consultant). Others include SRDC president Jean-Pierre Voyer, research director David Gyarmati, and senior research

associate Boris Palameta. The program will also draw on an extended network of experts to produce a series of empirical papers.

The Returns to Adult Learning Research Program is funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

Better than Facebook: SRDC pilot to help graduates find careers they want

The graphic is a promotional poster for CareerMotion.ca. At the top, the logo 'CareerMotion.ca' is displayed in orange and blue. Below it, a blue arrow points right with the text 'GET YOUR CAREER IN MOTION!'. The main text asks 'Want more challenge and opportunity in your career?' and invites users to join a pilot project to see how an interactive career guidance tool can help them reach their full potential, earning \$75 for their time. It notes that enrolment is limited and to register now at CareerMotion.ca. The graphic includes a red triangular warning sign with an upward arrow and a red rectangular sign that says 'YOUR NEW CAREER'. At the bottom, there is a photo of four diverse young adults smiling. The footer states 'This project is funded by the Government of Canada. Canada 100'.

The current generation of Canadian youth has, on average, more education than any of its preceding generations. However, about 25 per cent of graduates from a Canadian college or university end up in jobs that require far less education or far fewer skills than they have. Why do so many graduates find themselves in a job situation that does not meet their expectations and skills? What are the best ways to help them reach their full potential on the labour market and get their career in motion? Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has mandated SRDC to provide reliable evidence on whether labour market competencies of recent graduates can be improved with customized tools for job searching and career planning.

The CareerMotion demonstration project is to involve 700 graduates living in British Columbia. Participants are recruited among post-secondary graduates under the age of 40 who consider themselves overqualified for their most

recent or current job. Eligible participants have to hold a degree, diploma, or certificate from a Canadian post-secondary institution (college or university) obtained more than a year ago.

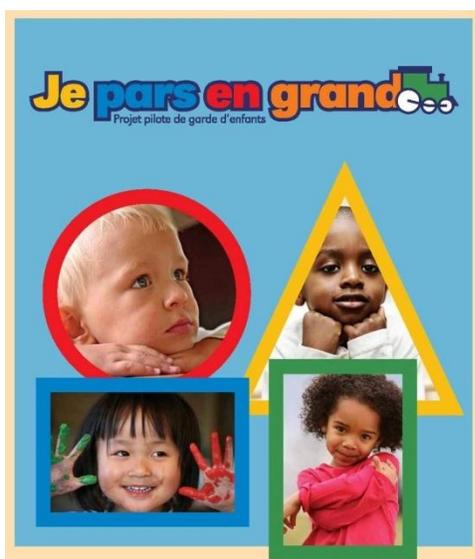
Participants have access to a customized Web portal that provides a wide range of information about today's labour market. The portal is designed to promote the effective use of relevant, high quality labour market information by relating resources and links to identified needs of the users, identifying learning outcomes that users can expect by following a given resource or link, and making the information readable, browsable, and searchable. It provides participants opportunities to gather and process occupational information and encourage them to record in writing their goals, future plans, and occupational analyses. Resources of labour market information are organized in ways that guide job seekers through five key stages of career planning and job searching: conducting self-assessments, generating opportunities, researching alternatives, making decisions, and planning actions.

SRDC is conducting the evaluation of CareerMotion as a social experiment using a random assignment design. Graduates are randomly assigned to one of two experimental groups: a program group that is given access to the Web portal, or a comparison group. Experiences of participants in the program and control groups will be assessed through Web surveys. A baseline survey is administered at enrolment, and a follow-up survey takes place five weeks later to capture the effects of providing participants with this customized Web portal. The effectiveness of the portal will be measured using validated psychometric scales and questionnaires to assess participants'

competencies in making decisions about their career and engaging in job search activities that can improve their employment outcomes.

Recruitment of participants in the project started earlier this year and research findings will be available in the summer of 2010. In February 2009, SRDC published *Improving Career Decision-Making of Young Workers*, which presents both the analytical framework for the study of job search and career planning behavior, and a set of guiding principles for the design of the Web-based intervention. For more information about CareerMotion, visit www.careermotion.ca or contact Carole Vincent, SRDC project director.

Timely lessons for early childhood initiatives in Ontario and New-Brunswick



An on-going SRDC project targeting preschoolers has very concrete implications for public policies in Ontario and New-Brunswick. Funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, the Child Care Pilot Project (CCPP) seeks to rigorously test the combined impact of a quality daycare program and a series of family literacy workshops on the development of Francophone pre-schoolers living in minority settings. While past studies have evaluated similar programs, few have done so using comparison groups. To our knowledge, none have tested the combined impact of a quality daycare program and family literacy workshops on preschoolers' linguistic, cultural, and overall development as well as their school preparedness.

CCPP has already provided important lessons that can be useful to new programming introduced in New Brunswick and Ontario. As part of its *Early Childhood Strategy Action Plan – 2008-2009*, the government of New Brunswick created early childhood development centres to provide integrated and coordinated community services and programs to parents and children. The province also introduced an early learning and child-care curriculum in province-regulated daycares.

Ontario has fully endorsed the recommendations of Dr. Pascal's 2009 report, *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*. Dr. Pascal's vision includes the creation of family-centered schools that are vibrant learning hubs, providing children and their parents with opportunities for child learning, care, health, culture, arts, and recreation from the prenatal period through adolescence. Starting in September 2010, the Ontario Ministry of Education will implement full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds over a period of three years.

The early childhood policies of New Brunswick and Ontario include features found in CCPP: provisions for early identification and intervention services, a common programming framework, and an array of strategies to improve school-parent communication and help parents promote their children's development and education. In both provinces, people connected to government

ministries responsible for these policies have expressed great interest in CCPP with a view to inform their program design and work plans.

CCPP has prompted equal interest from numerous community partners. For example, two French school boards in Ontario have considered a two-pronged intervention, targeting young Francophone preschoolers, similar to the one tested in CCPP. In September 2009, one board implemented a new preschool program for Francophone children aged three and their families. The piloted program aims to increase children's school readiness through a part-time quality preschool program combined with seven family literacy workshops where parents discuss how best to help their children prepare for school. SRDC is working with this school board to implement and evaluate the new program and conduct research activities, ranging from logic model development to data collection, data analysis, and report writing.

On another note, SRDC just released the CCPP baseline report. Interim findings of the project should be available in the fall of 2010.

Read the [CCPP baseline report](#).

SRDC staff news

SRDC welcomed four new employees over the past few months and is looking forward to the arrival of another this summer. Each of these individuals brings with them unique research experience that, combined with our existing staff, builds SRDC's pool of talent and expertise.



Glenn Thompson
Research analyst

Glenn Thompson joined SRDC as a full-time member of the Child Care Pilot Project (CCPP) team earlier this year. In addition to CCPP data analysis, he is helping identify validated French instruments to measure children's developmental progress in language acquisition and reading acquisition. His interests include reading acquisition in children, quantitative analysis of lexical properties, and applied statistical analyses. Glenn holds a Ph.D. in experimental psychology from the University of Ottawa.



David Cohen
Program evaluation manager

David's broad public sector experience includes 20 years working for the federal government including seven years as an executive in central agencies (Treasury Board Secretariat, Privy Council Office, Intergovernmental Affairs) and line departments (Regional Economic Development, Industry Canada). He has worked as special advisor/chief of staff for the Ontario government (Intergovernmental Affairs), as director for the Quebec government (Research

Institute on Gerontology/Health and Social Services), municipal governments (Federation of Canadian Municipalities), a public-private economic development organization (Montreal International), and as a socio-economic consultant. David obtained a Master's in Economics and a Master's in Business Administration from the Université de Montréal and pursued doctoral studies in Community and Regional Development at the University of British Columbia.



Ronda D. Louis-Jeune

Office administrator

Ronda D. Louis-Jeune joined SRDC in August 2009. Ronda obtained a Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences with a minor in Psychology at the University of Ottawa.



Danielle Patry

Research associate

Danielle Patry came on board with SRDC in April 2010. Danielle has field experience (recruiting schools, coordinating testing, and organizing data collection) and is familiar with various phases of research, from proposals to publications. She obtained a Ph.D. in experimental psychology from the University of Ottawa, which examined the role and effect of career development on academic self-determined motivation.



Natalie Conte

Researcher

Our Toronto office welcomed Natalie Conte in May 2010. Natalie is working on projects dealing with family literacy and adult learning. She obtained her Master's Degree in Public Policy at the School of Public Policy and Governance (SPPG) at the University of Toronto.



Marc Frenette

Senior research associate

Marc Frenette will join SRDC this summer. His initial focus will involve supporting the work of the Access to Post-Secondary Education (APSE) team in completing two major demonstration projects and to initiate supplementary research projects on the same topic. He will also continue to act as a core research member of the Returns to Adult Education Research Program, a major

collaboration between SRDC and the Canadian Labour Market and Skills Researcher Network (CLSRN). Marc has been a research economist with the Business and Labour Market Analysis Division at Statistics Canada since 1997. His primary areas of interest include economics of education and income inequality. He has published several research papers on both topics in government publications and Canadian and international scientific journals. Marc holds a Master's Degree in Economics and hopes to obtain a Ph.D. in 2010.

Last fiscal year, SRDC recognized six employees whose contributions to SRDC have spanned over a decade:

- **Michael Dowie**, senior research associate
- **Reuben Ford**, research director
- **David Gyarmati**, research director
- **June Lane**, payroll and benefits administrator
- **Claudia Nicholson**, senior research associate
- **Shawn de Raaf**, senior research associate.

They join Susanna Gurr, research director, and Elizabeth Rodgers, director of Human Resources and Corporate Services, as recipients of the SRDC 10-year service award.

Spreading the word: SRDC's recent presentations around the country

March 12. SRDC president, Jean-Pierre Voyer, participated in an **expert roundtable on future policy directions for displaced workers**, organized by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) in Ottawa. In his presentation, he discussed lessons learned from the Earnings Supplementation Project, a demonstration project that tested a financial incentive encouraging displaced workers to return to work more quickly (see "Helping displaced workers" in this issue).

April 26-27. SRDC attended **Statistics Canada's 2010 Socio-Economic Conference** in Gatineau, Québec, where Heather Smith Fowler, senior research associate, presented the early impacts of the BC AVID demonstration project on access to post-secondary education (PSE) in British Columbia. Ms. Smith Fowler spoke about how this early college-preparatory programming in high school can increase access to post-secondary education for middle-achieving students. Carole Vincent, principal research associate, discussed CareerMotion, a demonstration project to assist post-secondary graduates in their career planning. Jean-Pierre Voyer, and senior research associate, Boris Palameta, spoke about Willingness to Pay for PSE, a laboratory experiment to examine price sensitivity and loan aversion among Canadian high school students belonging to under-represented groups.

April 27. SRDC hosted at the Ottawa office a **lunch-and-learn presentation and discussion** for members of the Canadian Evaluation Society. Research director, David Gyarmati, and David Cohen, program evaluation manager, presented "Learning What Works and Why in Social Programs: An Introduction to Social Experiments in Canada".

May 2-5. At the **2010 conference of the Canadian Evaluation Society in Victoria**, British Columbia, SRDC's Susanna Gurr, research director, joined Mary Collins and Samantha Hartley-Folz of the British Columbia Healthy Living Alliance to lead a panel discussion on their perspectives and insights as evaluators and funders on evaluating community-based public health initiatives. Jean-Pierre Voyer explained the final results of the *learn\$ave* experiment, an asset-based program to induce low-income adults to pursue further education or start up a small business. Other presentations highlighted the CareerMotion project (Carole Vincent), the Willingness to Pay for PSE experiment (Jean-Pierre Voyer), and the early impacts of the BC AVID program (Reuben Ford, research director, and Elizabeth Dunn, research associate).

May 17. Reuben Ford was invited to speak in Toronto, Ontario, about the interim impacts of the BC AVID project on access to post-secondary education in British Columbia. Part of a presentation series called, Conversations, the event was sponsored by the **Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities**.

May 28-30. Jean-Pierre Voyer attended the **Canadian Economics Association 44th annual conference** at Université Laval in Quebec City. In the session on financial literacy, he presented the final results of the *learn\$ave* demonstration project and discussed the incremental impact of financial literacy training on the savings for education or training of low-income Canadians. In a second presentation, Mr. Voyer presented the results of the Willingness to Pay for PSE experiment. This presentation was billed in one of several sessions dedicated to the MESA project (Measuring the Effectiveness of Student Aid) managed by the Educational Policy Institute and Queen's University School of Policy Studies.

Read about the following presentations:

- [BC AVID interim results](#) (Canadian Evaluation Society conference, May 2010)
- [CareerMotion](#) (Canadian Evaluation Society conference, May 2010)
- [Displaced workers](#) (HRSDC roundtable, March 2010)
- [Evaluation of health initiatives](#) (Canadian Evaluation Society conference, May 2010)
- [Introduction to social experiments in Canada](#) (SRDC lunch and learn, April 2010)
- [learn\\$ave final results](#) (Canadian Economic Association conference, May 2010)
- [Willingness to Pay for PSE](#) (Canadian Economic Association conference, May 2010)