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SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING MATTERS

Newsletter of ENSEC (European Network on
Social and Emotional Competence)
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Co-chairs

- **Conference:** Kathy Evans Senior Lecturer University of Wales: Newport
kathy.evans@newport.ac.uk
- **Membership and Website:** Carmen Huser, Research Assistant, Nifbe –
Lower Saxony Institute for Early Childhood Education & Care, Osnabrueck,
Germany. carmen_huser@web.de
- **Research and Fund Raising,** Helen Cowie Professor Emeritus, University of
Surrey, Division of Health and Social care, Faculty of Health and Medical
Sciences; also Director of the UK Observatory for the Promotion of Non-
Violence www.ukobservatory.com H.Cowie@surrey.ac.uk and Renata
Miljevic-Ridicki Associate Professor, Faculty of Teacher Education, Zagreb,
Croatia rridicki@yahoo.com
- **Newsletter and Networking** Katherine Weare Emeritus Professor, University
of Southampton and Exeter skw@soton.ac.uk

Founding chairs

- Paul Cooper Professor of Special Education, Hong Kong Institute of
Education cooper@ied.edu.hk
- Carmel Cefai, Director, Euro Centre for Educational Resilience, University of
Malta carmel.cefai@um.edu.mt

Welcome!

On behalf of myself, my four co-chairs and our two founding chairs, I would like to welcome you to the very first ENSEC newsletter. These are exciting times for ENSEC as we continue to grow in the wake of the excellent conference organised at the University of Manchester in June – a report of which is below. Membership is expanding and all five new chairs have been busy building on the firm foundations set by Paul Cooper and Carmel Cefai- handling requests for membership, offers for the next conference, changes to the website and ideas for research and special interest groups. More details of these can be found below.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this newsletter. We would appreciate comments on it, please bearing in mind that the work of ENSEC is being done by chairs who are all volunteers, and on top of busy jobs.

We would love some interesting copy for the next edition. Please send any offerings to me. Sending the information in word so that it can be cut and pasted would be appreciated – no logos please. And please stick to about 500 words max!

Katherine Weare,
skw@soton.ac.uk

REPORT ON THE 2011 CONFERENCE

ENSEC celebrates diversity in theory, research and practice at 3rd biennial conference in Manchester, UK, 29th June – 3rd July 2011.

Nearly 200 delegates from more than 30 countries across the world enjoyed five sun-filled days in Manchester at ENSEC 2011. Following four excellent pre-conference workshops on the afternoon of Wednesday 29th June, the conference proper was opened in style in the evening with a performance from the Ordsall A Cappella Singers and Manchester Gay and Lesbian Choir. This was followed by an inspirational opening address by Professor Sir Al Aynsley Green, the former Children's Commissioner for England. Sir Al's presentation dealt with issues of bereavement in children and young people and reminded delegates of the need to listen to their perspectives in developing mental health services and interventions.

The first full day of the conference saw the theme of the importance of listening to the voices of young people continued by Sarah Brennan, CEO of Young Minds, whose excellent keynote presentation explored the role schools can play in promoting positive mental health. Thursday also saw the first and second rounds of

six parallel sessions in which ENSEC delegates shared their work with colleagues. The diversity and quality of presentations was exceptional – there was truly something for everyone. The day concluded with a poster session in the main foyer of the Renold Building, before a large number of delegates took the opportunity to visit the Museum of Science and Industry.

Friday saw two outstanding keynote presentations. The first, from Professor Susan Denham, explored issues of school readiness and the assessment of social and emotional competence in young children. The second, from Professor Helen Cowie, examined the issue of cyber-bullying and its impact on young people. Sandwiched in between the keynotes were another two fantastic, varied parallel sessions led by conference delegates.

The final two days of the conference on Saturday and Sunday were conducted at a more leisurely pace, with the afternoons free for delegates to take part in trips to Tatton Park Historical Estate and Manchester United FC, or simply to explore the city. Saturday's keynote was given by Professor Phillip Slee, who shared the recent findings of the KidsMatter national evaluation in his superb presentation. This was followed by Professor Mark Greenberg on Sunday, whose exceptional keynote drew a number of the themes established throughout the conference together with a look at the current status and future challenges in the field of social and emotional learning. Both days each also saw another set of parallel sessions – bringing the total number of individual presentations to over 120. Things ended on a high note with a brilliant performance from local group Charmed Voices as delegates enjoyed a slide show of photographs taken throughout the conference.

Each of the keynote presentations was filmed by University staff and the intention is that it will be uploaded to the conference website alongside accompanying Powerpoint slides in the near future. Additionally, we hope that a contact list of delegates will be circulated to allow further networking sharing of presentations/papers. For further details please contact me.

Neil Humphrey
Professor of Psychology of Education
University of Manchester.
ENSEC conference organiser, 2011
neil.humphrey@manchester.ac.uk

CHAIRS' REPORTS

Membership and website

After the successful annual ENSEC conference taking place in Manchester this year, we face an increasing interest in our network. About 60 new membership applications have been sent to us post-conference., from members all over the world. If you have not found your name in the members' list so far, please contact me.

In order to be in contact with all members and provide you with and share with you information, we hope to reconstruct the website in the future which will offer you a more interactive space. Meanwhile we have uploaded the keynote speeches from the conference to the member-accessible part of the website. If you are interested of receiving other presentations from the conference, please contact me so we can try to get in contact with the presenters. Or if you like to upload your presentation to the website, contact me for this too. Please understand that we cannot upload all presentations to the website or the conference website because of technical reasons.

Carmen Huser

carmen_huser@web.de

2013 ENSEC conference

Following the success of the 2011 Conference the ENSEC Chairs have already started work on the next Conference in 2013. A number of European Universities have expressed an interest in hosting the Conference and so we hope to be able to announce the venue for 2013 and for subsequent conferences by the end of the year. Planning the next Conference will start in the New Year so we would be very interested in hearing from any members who have experience or interest in working on the Conference Committee. For further information please contact me.

Kathy Evans

Kathy.Evans@newport.ac.uk

Research and special interest groups

We have formed our **first special interest group (SIG) on the role of the father in the child's development of social and emotional competence**. This SIG is about the influence of fathers who are present (not absent, which most of the relevant literature discusses): father care, parental competence of fathers, fatherhood, father need, types of fathers, single fathers, fathers in two-parent families, marital relationship and father involvement, gay fathers, fathers in various cultures, adolescent fathers etc. This SIG is a forum for professional exchange, which includes: articles, instruments, research on the topics, proposals, networking, possibilities for cross-cultural studies. Croatian members of ENSEC will start research on the topic in 2012. The process of collection of relevant literature and

psychological instruments is on-going. We are planning a symposium on the topic at the next ENSEC Conference. If you would like to join the SIG, please contact one of us.

Helen Cowie
H.Cowie@surrey.ac.uk
Renata Miljevic-Ridicki,
rridicki@yahoo.com.

There is a **suggestion for the formation of a special interest group on staff wellbeing and social and emotional learning**. Kerry Bird writes “I am convinced that one of the most effective ways to support young people's holistic growth is by investing, strategically and meaningfully (head, heart and action) in building the capacity of the key adults in their lives. Staff SEL Professional Development (curriculum and pedagogy) and Staff Wellbeing will continue to be relegated to a position of less importance when not made a part of a school's overall personal development plan. I am seeking others interested in a) staff SEL development b) staff wellbeing and c) guiding and supporting leadership to strategically build staff capacity – internally and externally. If you are interested in forming a Special Interest Group please contact me”.

Kerry Bird | Social & Emotional Education Officer
Catholic Education Services
130 Lake Street | Cairns Qld 4870 Australia
Email: kbird@cns.catholic.edu.au

REPORTS AND INFORMATION ABOUT PROGRAMMES AND RESOURCES

Second Step New Curriculum Ties SEL Skills to Academic Learning

As a growing body of research emerges on the ties between social-emotional skills and academic achievement, the globally focused nonprofit Committee for Children is working to integrate these two areas of learning. The 30-year-old organization, based in Seattle, creates research-based SEL curricula for nursery, primary, and secondary school-aged children. The most widely used is their evidence-based Second Step program, first introduced in 1989 as a violence prevention program. It is taught in 25,000 US schools and in thousands more schools in 26 countries, such as Germany (Faustlos), Denmark (Trin for Trin), and Turkey (İkinci Adım); while the English version (Second Step) has been introduced in schools in the UK, Australia,

and beyond. The program has been the subject of numerous scientific evaluations; findings are summarized on the organization's Web site, www.cfchildren.org.

Despite their diverse cultures and languages, most of Committee for Children's international partners choose the Second Step curriculum because it is a universal program that addresses the issues students and teachers commonly face, such as interpersonal conflicts, bullying, and resulting classroom disruption. The fourth edition, released this year, teaches the classic social-emotional competencies but now overtly applies them to academic learning skills.

In addition to lessons on empathy, emotion management, and problem solving—staples of the Second Step program since its inception—all grades of the new program feature Skills for Learning. These include focusing attention, listening, using self-talk, and being assertive, which help students self-regulate and become more effective learners. And the younger Second Step grades feature "Brain Builders": new games that help students build crucial executive-function skills, such as paying attention, using memory, and controlling behavior.

The new program includes a series of short engaging activities called Home Links, which students do at home with parents or carers. "Following Through Cards" provide five-minute daily classroom activities to reinforce students' new skills after each lesson. The new Second Step program comes in two parts—the items in the box or binder, and the resources found online at SecondStep.org. The Teaching Guide and the Program Implementation Guide are now online, as are video examples of lessons being taught in the classroom.

"Educators the world over want more peaceful classrooms, because that helps them teach academic subjects," says Dr. Andreas Schick, co-managing director of the Prevention Center Heidelberg (Germany), which supports the Faustlos program. "The Second Step program verifiably supports these efforts. That's why we love it. This program should reach the whole globe, because in the end, we're all working toward the same goal: creating a safe world where our children can unfold their unique potential."

Second Step is actively seeking partners who are positioned to bring the program to their country's schools and support quality program implementation. The program organizers believe that when children around the world learn social-emotional skills, they gain tools that will prove vital to their success in the future workplace, and even more importantly, they may learn to become the architects of a more peaceful world.

Joan Cole Duffell
Executive Director
206.438.6419, 206.423.8706
skype: joanduffell

The Northamptonshire Baby Room Project©

'The kind of parenting we get as babies makes a big difference to the brain we develop. If we're nurtured lovingly, we thrive emotionally.'

Sue Gerhardt (2004) *Why Love Matters*

The UK Government published *Supporting Families in the Foundation Years* paper setting out ways in which commissioners and the workforce can help deliver the Government's vision for foundation years services. The document provides the Government's response to reports from Michael Marmot, Frank Field, Graham Allen and Dame Clare Tickell's review. The strategy outlines the Government's vision for the foundation years and explains why it is important to focus on child development and how parents and families should be placed at the heart of services.

In this context the Northamptonshire Baby Room Project© project aims to challenge the prevalent view that 'babies don't do anything do they.' The intention is to help people to appreciate what a powerful organ a baby's brain is and how every experience a baby has shapes their brain. How people interact with babies is essential to physically and emotionally healthy babies. Babies crave interaction. They crave people playing with them, appropriately communicating with them, being interested in them and loving them.

The practitioners' course aims to create an imaginative, research informed project to inspire practitioners to change their practice using knowledge about baby brain development through interactions with babies, observation and reflection. It sets out to raise the quality of babies' experiences by creating a fun, sustainable and an exciting project that enlightens practitioners and parents about baby's brain development. By empowering practitioners working with young infants to become confident and passionate about their work the intention is to raise the quality of provision in early years settings such as nurseries and Children's Centres. A multidisciplinary team including an educational psychologist and early years specialist deliver three sessions based on baby brain development, wellbeing and mood. The sessions are designed to balance information sharing, making resources using the theme of the different sessions and immediate input. Follow up visits to practitioners in their settings are provided by the educational psychologist and the early years adviser.

The Northamptonshire Baby Room Project parent's course was designed following interest from parents who had noticed the differences in settings for babies and how practitioners were talking with them about baby brain development. The aim is to raise their understanding of how vital interacting, playing and loving their babies is influencing the connections their babies are making in their brains. The sessions follow the themes of the Northamptonshire Baby Room Project© practitioner's course. Crucial has been setting up the crèche facilities for parents and creating an

emotionally containing experience for babies and parents so that everyone can maximise the sessions. A journal is kept over the three months the course runs and parents have been benefited greatly from the experience. The Northamptonshire Baby Room Project© parents course is being evaluated by an educational psychologist colleague as her doctoral research.

Quotes from parents *"I look at my baby differently! Every time she learns something new I think 'wow' her brain cells are connecting."*

"She stands in front of me, pushes my legs, sits on the floor and points to the floor to tell me to sit down with her."

The Northamptonshire Baby Room Project© has been used by a range of organisations such as Local Authorities, nurseries and Children Centres. Hackney has developed a Hackney - Baby Room 'Buddy' Initiative based the six central sessions on the Northamptonshire Baby Room Project http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/assets/0000/0780/Initiatives_LocalAuthorityinitiatives.pdf

The Northamptonshire Baby Room Project© won a Nursery World national award in 2011. <http://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/1030965/Full-coverage-Nursery-World-Awards-2010>

Veronica Lawrence, ENSEC member
Specialist Senior Educational Psychologist Early Years
Northamptonshire County Council
vlawrence@northamptonshire.gov.uk
www.northamptonshirebabroom.org

Skylight

Who? Me? ...New bully-focused resource tools launched for international use

One teenage boy was given yet another school detention for repeated verbal bullying. "Who me?" he said, looking stunned. "But *I'm* not a bully!!"

At the ENSEC conference in Manchester in June bullying was given significant focus in both presentations and conversations because its prevalence and negative impact is so far reaching around the world. SkyLight in New Zealand (www.skylight.org.nz) is a not for profit charitable trust supporting and equipping people facing tough life issues – at any age. The programme has recently have drawn on the expertise of its staff, and on the latest research and best practise experiences of other professionals, to develop two unique new bullying resources.

Up until now the focus of resources and information has tended to be victim or prevention oriented. SkyLight had already developed youth bullying prevention

resources but it was clear there was still a gap. One of the new resources is for young people who are bullying others and the other is for their parents or carers. These new tools now aim to also offer practical support for those on *the other side of bullying*... The response to them has indicated clearly the big need there is for bully focused support options.

It can be very easy to label a bully and tell them to stop bullying immediately, without giving them the understanding and strategies about *why* and *how* to stop. Skylight's booklet *WHO ME?* is targeted at 10 – 17 year olds who have been bullying. It is innovative, 16 pages, hand-sized, colourful and very youth friendly. It doesn't judge these young readers, but it is very honest and straight talking and offers them: information about what bullying is and its effects on them and others, very practical, everyday steps to take to stop bullying and what the positive outcomes can be for them (and others) when they do stop it.

Skylight has always found that when we assist a young person who's been bullying there are adults wanting to know...So, *what can we do?* They often don't know how to stop their child's behaviour or even why it started in the first place. They might not ever have even witnessed it. Practical, everyday strategies can genuinely help a young person turn their behaviour around and having parents/carers involved as a part of this process is vital. *WHEN THE BULLY IS YOUR CHILD* is an 8 page, colourful leaflet specifically for parents/carers to help them to better understand bullying and offering a range of ways to help their child to end their bullying behaviour.

Both these new support resources provide invaluable tools not only for young people who've been bullying and their families, but also for schools, professionals and community organisations wanting to address the challenge of bullying. Currently in English, they can be readily updated for new languages and local support contact information as requested. Multiple orders are discounted.

Skylight can be contacted at support@skylight-trust.org.nz or +64 4 939 6767. Skylight's other bullying and resilience building resources can be found at www.skylight.org.nz/shop , including The Getting Stronger Game (with bullying card sets) and a credit card sized, fold out info sheet for teens called simply BULLYING. Additionally, we make available some of the best bullying themed books for children from around the world.

"Thanks for the WHO ME booklet. It helped me see things differently and try to do stuff in a new way. I liked that it made me feel like I could change things for the better." Jake, 14, Wellington, New Zealand.

Tricia Irving Hendry,
Skylight Deputy Chief Executive, New Zealand
publishing@skylight-trust.org.nz

RECENT CONFERENCES

Anti-bullying Conference in Taiwan

The Humanistic Education Foundation (HEF) <http://hef.yam.org.tw/index02.html> is a non-profit organization dedicated to the development of person-centred education in Taiwan. In August 2011, HEF organized an international conference in Taipei on strategies for coping with school bullying. Helen Cowie, an ENSEC Chair, was one of the invited speakers along with Debra Pepler from Canada, Pamela Munn from Scotland, Mitsuru Taki from Japan and Antoinette Hetzler from Sweden. HEF is campaigning against the authoritarian practice dominant in the Taiwanese school system. As HEF puts it, in Taiwan, “governments and schools have been used to the idea of controlling students rather than educating them. However, more than 20 years of democratization has nurtured new generations of students who need more modernized education. But changes within the education sector have been slow”. The need for the conference was prompted by recent Ministry of Education calls for tougher discipline in schools involving police and military officers on campus to maintain law and order. HEF considers that this is an over-reaction that indicates a lack of understanding of children and young people’s relationships and the conflicts that inevitably arise in the course of everyday social interaction. The conference provided an opportunity for educators from different countries to share their knowledge and expertise on non-violent strategies for addressing the issue of school bullying. It was fascinating to be a part of the debates and discussions that took place during the conference and to meet practitioners and researchers who are dedicated to initiating change. The international speakers also were given the opportunity to meet mayors and politicians who may be able to influence policies in Taiwan. Helen extended an invitation to all the participants at the conference to join ENSEC so that they can be a part of our community and perhaps make a contribution to the next ENSEC conference.

Helen Cowie
H.Cowie@surrey.ac.uk

RECENT REPORTS

Ofsted (2011) Report: *Supporting Children with Challenging Behaviour Through a Nurture Group Approach*, Ref. 100230

This very positive report will have been welcomed by the many advocates of Nurture Groups, the numbers of which have grown exponentially in the past 15 years in the UK. Examples of this originally English intervention for Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, developed by Marjorie Boxall in early 1970's, can now be found not only throughout the UK but also in Canada, Malta and New Zealand. One of the most striking things about the Nurture Group phenomenon has been the enthusiasm with which they have been adopted by schools, and the extremely positive responses that pupils and their carers have expressed about their value and effectiveness.

These positive aspects of Nurture Group provision are all reflected in this study of 29 English Nurture Groups, which was carried out by Ofsted between November 2010 and March 2011. The majority of the 370+ children who participated in this study are claimed to have displayed significant improvements in social-emotional and behavioural functioning, and, in some cases, academic gains were identified too. Of particular interest is the finding that the majority of the 95 parents interviewed were not only deeply impressed by the positive impact of Nurture Group placement on their children's behavior and engagement with schooling, but they also indicated that their own relationships with their children were often enhanced through involvement with the Nurture Group, both as a result of positive developments in the children's general disposition and as a result of the strategic support parents received from Nurture Group staff.

Another very important point made by the authors, is that successful Nurture Groups are embedded within nurturing schools, where there is continuity between Nurture Group and mainstream values, expectations and practices. This is important for the effectiveness of the Nurture Group and the school as a whole, since Nurture Group placement is intended to be temporary, with full-time return to the mainstream class being a major purpose of Nurture Groups.

The authors make a number of references to the importance of adherence to the key nurturing principles that were originally laid down by Marjorie Boxall, which concern the importance nurturing attachment promoting relationships, opportunities for play, and the social-emotional learning that goes on when children and adults share in routine domestic behavior, such as participation in group meals. It is clear from this study that a great deal of time and effort is devoted by staff in these groups to careful planning and monitoring of practice to ensure its fidelity with the original Nurture group vision.

Whilst this is a very positive report, it is not without some criticisms of what was observed. Particular attention is given to an unevenness in what they saw in relation to staff attention to academic learning. Where this was carefully programmed into the routine and where there was detailed communication between mainstream and the Nurture Group staff in relation to academics, the social-emotional improvements were accompanied by academic progress. This was less the case in the absence of such measures. Another point of criticism is the lack of systematic tracking of the progress of former Nurture Group pupils' progress in relation to the specific needs initially identified as a justification for placement. Overall, however, this report adds to the growing body of evidence which supports the value of Nurture Group placement for pupils with social, emotional and behavioral difficulties, and provides further justification for Ofsted's endorsement of the approach.

Paul Cooper,
Pwc5@leicester.ac.uk

OECD (2011), *Against the Odds: Disadvantaged Students Who Succeed in School*, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264090873-en>

The latest Eurostat statistics show that one in every five children in the EU (20%) is at the risk of poverty; this figure is set to increase as a result of the current economic crisis, with increasing unemployment, taxation and cuts in social benefits leading to further economic hardship, poverty and inequality. The report just published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on the academic success of students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, thus comes as a very welcome initiative against the looming European economic winter. The report is based on 2006 data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) which included more than 400,000 students from 57 countries around the world. It examines 15 year old students' academic achievement in core subjects, namely the application of knowledge and skills gained to solve standardised tasks in reading, mathematics and science at the end of their school. The study also considers various resilience-related factors, such as students' approaches to learning, motivation and self-concept, and various school characteristics.

The report found considerable differences across countries in the proportion of resilient students, with half of disadvantaged students in some countries being considered as resilient. A within-country analysis suggests that most resilient students in the OECD countries do very well, with a high performance (eg. proficiency Level 4 in Science out of 6 levels, which is above the established baseline level of competency) even when compared to their more advantaged peers. Across OECD countries, disadvantaged students spent 20% less time learning science at school than their more advantaged peers, but among disadvantaged students, resilient students spend more time learning science at school than low

achieving disadvantaged peers. Disadvantaged students who spend an extra hour a week learning science at school are 1.27 times more likely to do well in science than disadvantaged peers who lack such opportunity. Providing more opportunity for science learning for disadvantaged students, would thus help to bridge the performance gap and improve equity in educational outcomes. The results also suggest that resilience in science is not a domain-specific characteristic; in most countries the vast majority of students who are resilient in science would be considered likewise in mathematics and/or reading. No notable gender differences in resilience were identified, while differences according to language and immigrant background appear were marginal and only in few countries.

The report also found that in contrast to their disadvantaged low achieving peers, resilient students are intrinsically motivated, engaged and confident learners who enjoy learning science, even when holding such factors such as student demographics, school characteristics and other approaches to learning, constant. Disadvantaged students who are confident learners are 1.95 times more likely to do well in science than their less confident disadvantaged peers. Building academic self-efficacy appears to be particularly critical for disadvantaged students who may lack the supportive home environment conducive to confidence and other positive attributes enjoyed by their more advantaged peers. On the other hand, little evidence was found that school factors such as type of school administration, admission policies, school competition and school resources, were associated with resilience.

The report underlines that school success is possible for socio-economically disadvantaged students. The main message is that schools have an important role to play in promoting resilience amongst disadvantaged students by making use of activities and practices that foster disadvantaged students' motivation and confidence as competent and able learners and providing more opportunities for them to spend more time learning at school. However, as the report itself underlines, the study is hampered by various limitations. Defining resilience exclusively in terms of performance in academic subjects (and with a very small number of subjects at that), is a very narrow and simplistic definition of what resilience is about. For instance, outcome variables such as truancy, grade repetition, school drop outs and exclusion rates were not included. Resilience is not only about performance, it is about academic, social and emotional learning. Moreover, the number of resilience-related variables examined in the study is rather limited; missing for instance are such factors as student participation in classroom activities, teachers' characteristics, and resilience policies and programmes implemented by schools. Information from parents is also missing, as the data available was incomplete and consequently left out. Despite these limitations, however, the report is based on an extensive dataset across numerous countries, and may also serve as a basis to launch a series of more comprehensive and inclusive cross cultural studies on educational resilience in the future.

Carmel Cefai

carmel.cefai@um.edu.mt

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Gifted and Talented Children: The Research Approach

The University of Pavia, Italy has announced the Third National Conference of the Italian Laboratory for Research and Intervention in the Development of Talent, Potential and Giftedness, on the theme “***Gifted and Talented children: the Research approach***” The Conference is being held on 25th and 26th November 2011 at the University of Pavia. Maureen Neihart from the National Institute of Education, Singapore, is the keynote speaker. The conference is open to parents, psychologists, counsellors, youth workers, educators and students. Submitted abstracts must be related to the theme of talented and gifted children within school, family and social contexts. Deadline call for posters: October 31, 2011. Submission and registration forms may be downloaded at: <http://talento.myblog.it/> For any further information please contact: labtalento@unipv.it

Children and Youth in a Changing World

The 2012 Inter-Congress of International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) on ‘***Children and Youth in a Changing World***’ shall be held at KIIT University, Bhubaneswar in India, during November 26-30 2012. The Inter-Congress will be organised jointly by IUAES Commission on Children, Youth and Childhood and Centre for Children Studies, Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences (KISS). The principle aim of this congress is to bring researchers and participants in academia, governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations and agencies working on and with children from different parts of the world and offer them a common platform to address various emerging issues relating to children and childhood. It is recognised that while anthropology and ethnography are changing and enriching our understanding of the basic principles of childhood, the application of these principles are at the forefront of efforts to understand and aid children in stressful and rapidly changing environments. The conference organisers would like to encourage participants to engage in the dynamic discussions of contemporary childhood. They are particularly anxious to include advocates and spokespersons for minority and tribal groups. ENSEC members are especially invited to submit expressions of interest (150 words) to Dr Erica Joslyn, University Campus Suffolk, UK (e.joslyn@ucs.ac.uk) by 30 September 2011 on the theme of ‘*Working with Children/Youth in Intervention or Support Programmes*’

This session theme covers a range of ENSEC activities including:

- Evidence based practice - empirically grounded and theoretically sound intervention and prevention strategies; this will normally involve empirical research published in peer reviewed journals

- Socio-emotional competence - knowledge, attitudes and skills relating to the intra and inter personal processes associated with prosocial behaviour, including problem solving skills, decision making skills, stress management, self reliance, anger regulation, collaborative skills and communication skills.
- Resilience - the development of socio-emotional competence amongst children and young persons who are vulnerable in one or more areas of their development.

Submission of completed abstracts/papers and or poster presentations will be required by 1 May 2012.

Dr Erica Joslyn
Head of Division, Children, Young People & Education
University Campus Suffolk
Email: e.joslyn@ucs.ac.uk