

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

FACULTY PRESENTATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA
“EARLY DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION”

Action Requested: Receive the presentation.

Executive Summary: The Regents’ Center for Early Developmental Education was established in 1988 as a statewide center to improve early childhood education (birth-8 years) in Iowa through research, program development, and dissemination of best practices. The Center seeks to develop research-based programs and curriculum materials that respect the unique developmental needs of young children and their families and to develop a model program for educating preservice and inservice teachers in developmentally appropriate education. A primary focus of the Center is to contribute to a more literate citizenry in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) by laying the foundation for math and science in the early years, promoting the development of positive attitudes toward math and science, and combating the math and science phobia that prevails among students and early childhood and elementary teachers.

Two years ago, as part of its efforts to improve early childhood education across Iowa, the Center assisted the state with the development of the state-funded voluntary preschool programs. The Center conducts summits on issues of importance to the early childhood community; developed a post-baccalaureate endorsement program for elementary teachers to prepare them to teach in preschool classrooms; offers workshops in early childhood science education across the state; and trains early childhood professionals in a promising new research-based instrument for evaluating the quality of preschool programs.

Dr. Betty Zan will describe the Center’s goals and accomplishments. Dr. Zan, who has been on the faculty at UNI since 1994, is the Director of the Regents’ Center for Early Developmental Education and Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at UNI. She holds a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of Houston.

Dr. Zan is principal investigator on a four-year, \$1.7 million Instructional Materials Development grant from the National Science Foundation. The project, *Ramp and Pathways: A Constructivist Approach to Physical Science*, is based on curriculum development research conducted at the Freeburg Early Childhood Program. Dr. Zan also serves as principal investigator on a 3-year, \$650,000 Head Start-University Partnership grant, *Coaching and Mentoring for Preschool Quality*, funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Youth. This project seeks to increase the effectiveness of Head Start teachers through an intensive program of professional development and mentoring. She also has two grants from the state of Iowa: *Quality in Action*, from the Iowa Office of Empowerment and Improving Science Instruction in Preschool, from the Iowa Mathematics and Science Education Partnership. She represents UNI on the Child Development Coordinating Council, which provides oversight to the state’s preschool programs for at-risk children.

Dr. Zan has extensive experience conducting professional development for preschool and early primary teachers. She is the co-author of *Moral Classrooms, Moral Children* (DeVries & Zan, 1994) and *Developing Constructivist Curriculum* (DeVries, Zan, Hildebrandt, Edmiaston, & Sales, 2002).