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### **Research reflects the dedication of CEC to people with neurodiversity**

This report documents recent research and scholarly activities conducted at the Clinical Education Complex. The activities included (a) meeting with WKU department heads and research fellows to share ideas about collaborative research projects that can be done with the CEC; (b) Program Directors presenting on programs at the Kentucky Association of Teacher Educators (KATE), (c) Program Directors mentoring graduate students on posters for Kentucky Council for Exceptional Children (KYCEC), (d) completing the Organization for Autism research *Kit for Kids* with Lifeworks@WKU, and (e) developing a grant application to Mitsubishi Electric to support students preparing a summer internship program for the Kelly Autism Program.

### **Meeting with Department Heads, Program Directors, and Research Fellows**

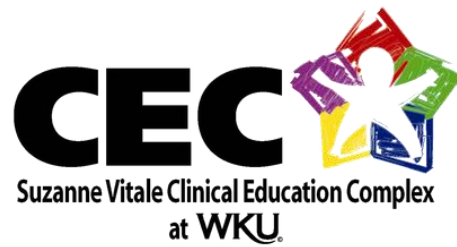
In the Fall 2023 semester, the Director of Research met with multiple departments across WKU to share about potential collaborative research opportunities. These included the following:

1. Gary Houchens, Director of the Education Leadership Doctoral Program
2. Ritchie Taylor, Faculty Fellow for Research and Creative Activity in College of Health and Human Services
3. Jenni Redifer, Interim Associate Provost for Research and Graduate Education
4. Robert Welsh, PsyD Program Director
5. Susan Keesey, Director of School of Teacher Education

### **Conference Presentations at Kentucky Association for Teacher Educators**

*Michelle Elkins'* presentation at KATE highlighted the work being done within the Kelly Autism Program and provided an overview of the Kelly Autism Program's mission, goals, and services.

*Beth Schaefer's* presentation at KATE showcased the Regional Early Childhood Center (RECC) program's contributions to the early education of children with extensive support needs. Key highlights of her presentation included outcomes and success stories from both the children who have benefited from the RECC program and the WKU students who work in the program.



### **Graduate Student Posters for the Kentucky Council for Exceptional Children Conference**

*Caroline Hudson, Michelle Elkins, and Nicole Laffin*, are working with two graduate students to present their work through poster presentations. These poster presentations will provide a platform for sharing the work of the CEC and promoting collaborative dialogue among educators, researchers, and practitioners in the field of special education.

### **Kit for Kids Training from the Organization of Autism Research with Lifeworks@WKU**

*Noah Thomas and Christina Noel* trained over 250 students at North Jackson Elementary in grades 3-6 on what autism is and how to be a good friend to kids with autism. They used the materials provided by the Organization of Autism Research grant, which included a book called “What’s up with Nick,” a booklet about autism, and certificates for all students who completed the program.

### **Grant Application to Mitsubishi Electric for Kelly Autism Program Summer Internship**

The grant application will be submitted to Mitsubishi Electric on November 1<sup>st</sup> and aims to secure funding for a summer internship program connected to the Kelly Autism Program. This initiative will offer students the opportunity to gain practical experience in autism education and support services while contributing to the program's continued success. It will be a two-year grant with a budget of \$100,000.

The research and scholarly activities presented in this report reflect the dedication of the CEC’s staff and students to the field of neurodiversity. The presentations at the KATE conference and CEC state conference, the *Kit for Kids* training, as well as the grant application to Mitsubishi Electric, demonstrate the CEC’s commitment to advancing knowledge, promoting inclusive practices, and supporting students with neurodiversity. These activities underscore the importance of ongoing research and collaboration to improve the lives of individuals with autism and other exceptional needs