

The logo for the Teaching, Learning, & Counseling Consortium (CTL) is displayed in a large, bold, serif font. The letters 'C', 'T', and 'L' are white and set against a black rectangular background. The logo is positioned in the upper left corner of the page, overlapping a background collage of educational terms.The text "ON THE CUTTING EDGE" is written in a white, serif font and is centered within a black rectangular box. This box is placed over the top right portion of the background collage.

## *A Pivotal Moment in the Teaching, Learning, & Counseling Consortium*

by Sue Sears, Wilda Lajja-Rodriguez, Ivor Weiner, Deborah Buttitta, Vanessa Goodwin  
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For over 30 years, the Michael D. Eisner College of Education (MDECOE) at California State University, Northridge has been providing services to the local community. From its beginnings as a small reading clinic, the Teaching, Learning, & Counseling Consortium (TLCC) now includes psycho-educational assessment, educational therapy, counseling, parent to parent mentoring, workshops and resources. All services are provided at no or low cost, and under the auspices of a university affiliated collective of faculty educators, psychologists, and parents. Embracing neurodiversity and client/family centered approaches to services, the TLCC is committed to addressing the social inequities that prohibit educational success and jeopardize the mental and physical health of those living in underserved communities.

In response to the pandemic, the TLCC embarked on a new chapter in its storied history. Pivoting from face-to-face to virtual services, TLCC programs continued operating. The Mitchell Family Counseling Clinic (MFCC) secured approval for Telehealth counseling, extended the skill set of marriage and family therapist (MFT) trainees to working with first responders, and delivered school-wide mindfulness programs to several local schools. Providing additional support for students struggling academically, educational therapy interns participated in a series of workshops designed to enhance online learning, and literacy tutoring strengthened family collaboration, with the aim of addressing the social/emotional hardships and isolation students were experiencing. With strict safety protocols in place, CSUN students were loaned university-testing materials to conduct psycho-educational assessments.

The Family Focus Resource Center (FFRC) also moved to a virtual platform, offering online parent support groups, and developing a Behavior at Home workshop series. Recognizing early on that the pandemic was disproportionately affecting underserved communities, the FFRC secured funds to initiate "Project Diaper," purchasing and delivering diapers and wipes to over 200 local low-income families. Throughout the 2020-2021 academic year, community outreach continued with the distribution of Distance Learning Kits, children's books, Holiday Fun Kits, and gift cards.

Those of us at the TLCC are looking forward to the day we can return to campus-based programs. At the same time we recognize that this return must not be "business as usual." Consistent with what others are reporting, we have found advantages of providing services remotely (Torous et al., 2020). These include the expansion of geographical boundaries for those we can serve, elimination of transportation issues and costs, and overall enhanced efficiency and convenience, critical considerations for individuals and families with multiple time consuming commitments. In sum, these advantages lift barriers and, when combined with the no or low cost fees offered in the TLCC, have the potential to increase ongoing access to services for low income families. Therefore, moving forward, the TLCC will offer both remote and in-person options, and with the guidance of our partner staff and families in the FFRC, continue to explore opportunities to bring needed resources into communities.

The TLCC is strategically positioned at the intersection of community service and professional preparation; therefore, whatever decisions we make regarding services directly impact our CSUN students. The model of clinical experience we intend to pursue, one that includes both face-to-face and virtual services, has distinct benefits for our school psychology, teacher education, marriage and family and educational therapy programs. While in-person assessment, counseling, and educational and family support will remain options, to be "on the cutting edge," our graduates must also be proficient in utilizing the virtual platforms that will populate the post-COVID landscape. We are confident they will be prepared to do so.

## Want to Learn More About Virtual Services and Remote Learning?

*Using Telehealth to Expand Access to Essential Health Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Centers for Disease Control (CDC).*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/telehealth.html>

*Evidence-Based and Promising Practices to Support Continuity of Learning for Students with Disabilities: Practices and Resources to Support Teachers, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP).*

[https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SWDLearning-Teachers%20Brief\\_April%202020.pdf](https://osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SWDLearning-Teachers%20Brief_April%202020.pdf)

*Schools bring mindfulness to the classroom to help kids in the Covid-19 crisis. The Hechinger Report: Covering Innovation & Inequality in Education.*

<https://hechingerreport.org/schools-bring-mindfulness-to-the-classroom-to-help-kids-in-the-covid-19-crisis/>

## Learn More About Programs in the TLCC

Berke Assessment Library and Clinic  
Director, Dr. Wilda Laija-Rodriguez  
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818-677- 8522

Mitchell Family Counseling Clinic (MFCC)  
Director, Dr. Deborah Buttitta  
[mitchellfamilyclinic@csun.edu](mailto:mitchellfamilyclinic@csun.edu)  
818-677-2568

Family Focus Resource Center (FFRC)  
Director, Dr. Ivor Weiner  
Program Manager, Ms. Victoria Berrey  
[family.focus@csun.edu](mailto:family.focus@csun.edu)  
818-677-6854

Special Education Literacy Clinic  
Director, Dr. Vanessa Goodwin  
[vanessa.goodwin@csun.edu](mailto:vanessa.goodwin@csun.edu)  
818-677-8522

## References

Torous, J., Jän Myrick, K., Rauseo-Ricupero, N., & Firth, J. (2020). Digital mental health and COVID-19: Using technology today to accelerate the curve on access and quality tomorrow. *JMIR Mental Health*, 7(3), e18848. <https://doi.org/10.2196/18848>



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