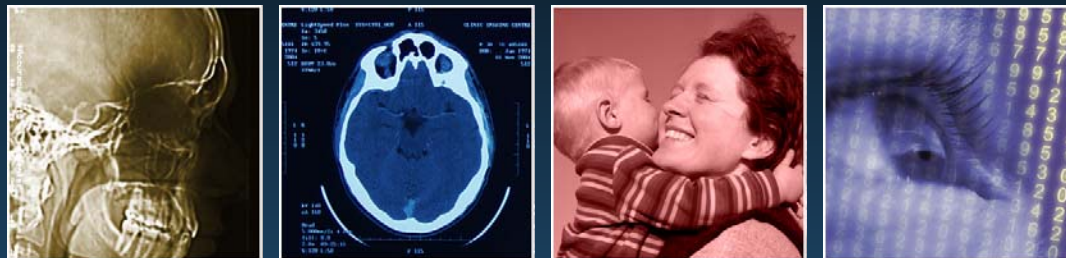


Centre for Research on Language, Mind and Brain



Literacy Research Funding in Canada: Meeting the Challenge, Reaping the Benefits

Vincent L. Gracco

Susan Rvachew

About the Centre

- Research centre for the interdisciplinary study of human language
- Diverse group of Quebec scientists working within and across four research themes
- Representing multiple disciplines, departments and faculties
- Understanding the unique neurobiological and social endowment of language

Membership



Department of Educational and Counseling
Psychology

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

Department of Linguistics

Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery

Department of Psychology

School of Communication Sciences and Disorders



Ecole d'Orthophonie et d'Audiologie

Département de Linguistique



Department of Psychology



Département de Linguistique

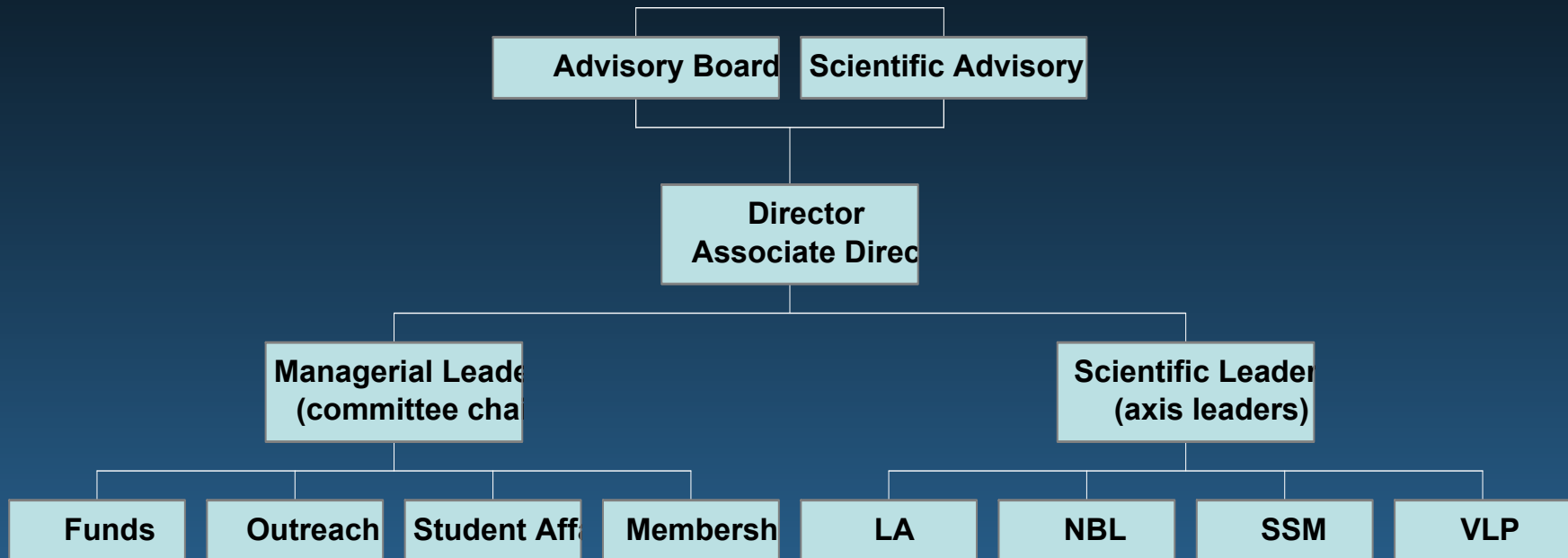
Département de Psychologie



Montreal Neurological Institute

McConnell Brain Imaging Centre

Management Structure



o Funded through grants from FQRSC, FQRNT, McGill and UQAM

Centre Goals

- Increasing interdisciplinary collaboration
- Attracting new researchers
- Provide academic enrichment
- Community outreach and knowledge transfer
- Increasing national and international linkages

Literacy

- "'Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society.'" (UNESCO, 2003).

Literacy as a Process

- Genetic and epigenetic factors
- Neurodevelopmental processes
- Sensory (external) and motor (expressive) processes
- Speech and language
- Reading, writing and numeracy
- Cognitive mechanisms

Literacy Challenge in Canada

- In 2003, over 40% of Canadians aged 16 to 65 years fell below the level essential for successful functioning in a modern industrialized economy (ALLS).
- Costs are high--increased drop out rates, behavioural and psychiatric problems, health problems and productivity
- Billions of dollars in lost economic output and increased health costs

The Fundamental Role of Research

- To create new knowledge

Neuroscientific understanding of the factors contributing to optimal development of literacy

- To improve literacy skills through cutting-edge evidence-based practice

Generated from a fundamental understanding of the underlying processes

- To influence (change) policy

Focus spending and human resources

The Support for Research

- To date -- minimal
- SSHRC--4%
- NSERC--0.25%
- CIHR--0.25%
- Funds directed to education based projects
- Lack of focus on fundamental processes

Recommendation 1

- Increase and target funding for basic and applied research on literacy

Neuroscientific understanding of normal and disordered learning mechanisms

Interaction among component processes

Move from correlation to causation

Translating the knowledge into strategies for literacy-based educational practices

Transdisciplinary, multicentre research initiatives

Recommendation 2

- Promote national and international collaborations among literacy research centres
- Critical mass of research subjects, a diversity of researchers, diversity of research expertise and shared technical resources
- Support of international research consortiums

Recommendation 3

- Embed high quality program evaluation research into service delivery systems
- Percentage of publicly funded health, education and social services should be earmarked for outcomes research
- Promote collaborations between service providers, academic researchers and economists to identify effective practices and continuously improve the cost efficiency of service delivery

- It has been suggested that the annual productivity level benefit of raising average literacy levels of Canadians by 1% is \$18,000,000,000.
- With increased funding and targeted initiatives for basic, applied and translational research in literacy and literacy-related processes, we can substantially impact the health and wealth of the nation.