

## ***NEWS RELEASE***

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# **Developing interactive learning focus of information session for educators**

*Dr. Sylvia Chard's project approach enables educators  
to engage children through active learning*

**Prince Albert, May 11, 2007** – University of Alberta researcher Dr. Sylvia Chard provided educators with strategies for formulating engaging learning projects during a public information session at SIAST Woodland Campus. The session was open to teachers, early childhood educators, librarians and other educational professionals working with children from 0-12 years of age.

The project approach to teaching and learning allows educators to create experiences that are interactive and engaging. In the first phase of the project, educators facilitate children's learning by focusing on their interests and experiences. The next phase provides opportunities for children to do their own research through fieldwork, investigations and interviews. Objects, books, field experts and other materials are provided to the children to assist in their investigations. The final stage of a project involves gathering the children in a group to share what they have developed and learned.

Dr. Chard says, "Active learning projects allow children to build on what they already know. It also helps children to make better sense of the world they live in and to better understand one another." Dr. Chard adds, "The projects enable children to understand

the value of literacy and numeracy in real-life contexts. It also encourages them to seek sources of information outside school and to communicate with their parents.”

Students enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program at SIAST Woodland Campus took part in an afternoon workshop with Chard in advance of the evening public information session. Veryl Coghill, Early Childhood Education program head at SIAST Woodland Campus, says, “The project approach philosophy is an integral part of our Early Childhood Education program, and we feel it is very important to provide our students with a one-on-one opportunity to learn directly from a field expert.” Coghill adds, “When given the opportunity to investigate real-life topics, children are highly motivated and work at their own level in terms of skill development.” Drawing, music, construction and dramatic play, all components of active learning, are part of the Early Childhood Education program curriculum.

More information about Dr. Chard’s research can be found at [www.projectapproach.org](http://www.projectapproach.org).

SIAST is Saskatchewan’s primary public institution for post-secondary technical education and skills training, recognized nationally and internationally for its expertise and innovation. More than 12,000 students are registered in SIAST programs, which touch every sector of the economy; additionally, the organization draws more than 28,000 individual course registrations. It operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

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