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Citation and Response of the 2011 O. Max Gardner Award Recipient

DR. DIANE M. BROWDER

Internationally recognized faculty member, Dr. Diane M. Browder is one of the nation's leading experts on educating and assessing the progress of children with moderate and severe developmental disabilities. For more than two decades, Dr. Browder has conducted exhaustive research and writing on assessment and instruction for students with disabilities. While educational opportunities for children with disabilities have grown since the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975, Dr. Browder's pioneering research in special education has led the way in demonstrating how to teach academic content including not only literacy, but also mathematics and science to students with significant cognitive disabilities. Her research has changed the face of what we expect from and how we support students with disabilities.

In 1998, Dr. Browder was recruited from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte for the endowed Snyder Distinguished Professorship of Special Education. In her role at UNC Charlotte, Dr. Browder spearheaded the development of a new doctoral program in special education. Through federally funded research grants, she and her team developed the first and only comprehensive early literacy curriculum – Early Literacy Skills Builder (ELSB) – designed as a school-based curriculum to help moderately and severely disabled children develop the skills and behaviors they need to succeed in a standard reading program. Results of a randomly assigned experimental evaluation showed that students participating in the ELSB program had significantly improved nonverbal literacy, phonemic awareness, and early literacy skills. ELSB has been adopted by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system and is used in many major school systems across the country. These materials have also been translated and incorporated into special education classrooms in Egypt and the Ukraine.

A colleague noted that Dr. Diane Browder “has done more to impact the quality of education and quality of life for severely disabled children than any other individual in the past half century. She has changed the professional landscape of special education; she has raised the

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educational expectations for disabled students; and she has dramatically improved the quality of life for these students, their teachers, and their families.”

Recognizing your leading-edge research in special education, the work you have conducted to enhance the quality of services for students with severe disabilities, and one who has made great contributions to the welfare of the human race, the Board of Governors takes great pride in presenting the 2011 Oliver Max Gardner Award to you, Dr. Diane M. Browder, Lake and Edward P. Snyder, Jr. Distinguished Professor of Special Education at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

In Dr. Browder’s brief remarks, she stated how proud she was to be a part of this University and she was particularly proud of its values. She thanked the Board of Governors for honoring her. Dr. Browder thanked Mr. Ralph Webb Gardner, who attended the event, and his family for this deep honor in recognizing faculty and the value of research. Dr. Browder thanked her husband, guests and colleagues who were present. She remarked that her accomplishments would not be possible without the help of her peers and students at UNC Charlotte.

Dr. Browder spoke of the doctoral program that she and her colleagues had developed. The program has been rated by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as being one of the Top 10 doctoral programs in the country. She remarked that graduate level students not only graduate with strong research records and accomplishments, but they also graduate demonstrating confidence to plan in a multi-cultural environment and the ability to advocate for students with disabilities.

In closing, Dr. Browder acknowledged that through continued research, she hoped to give disabled children the opportunity to learn and to dramatically improve their quality of life so they are able to *show what they know*.