

## Guest Editors' Comments

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It is fitting that the current volume of the *Journal of Precision Teaching and Celeration* (JPTC) is prefaced by the recognition of the increasing interest in Precision Teaching (PT) in Ireland and the context in which it has been promoted. In an eloquent description of PT, John O. Cooper (1996) stated that "PT stimulates many questions and discoveries from students and teachers that result in rapid instructional change.... PT seems as if it is an uncultivated lovely WILD FLOWER" (p.4). Due recognition should be given as to how this "wild flower" has come to Ireland. Two professionals have helped create the environment wherein PT has flourished. John O. Cooper, who has provided numerous resources to help our development, and Mickey Keenan (University of Ulster) both deserve credit for cultivating, either directly or indirectly, all of the professionals who have contributed to this volume. We are thankful to both.

On reflecting upon our current stage of professional development we are pleased to say that PT has taken root in Ireland. The Saplings Model of Education (Co. Kildare) and Abalta (Galway) are two centres where PT is used in the education of children with autism. In addition, the University of Ulster is a central component in establishing PT in various areas of research. Further work, however, needs to be done to link "applied knowledge" with "experimental knowledge." We will all benefit from this relationship.

To look forward is always a difficult endeavour. The metaphor as presented by Cooper (1996) of PT as a wild flower is useful, particularly his comment that one attribute of a wild flower is that it is not "aggressively competitive or invasive" (p.4). Current practitioners everywhere should reflect upon these attributes. In Ireland it has become commonplace for parents to resort to litigation in order to ensure appropriate (optimal) education for children with autism. We, therefore, more than others should be mindful of Cooper's analogy. Marketing and communication of our product is of paramount importance. In a society where more than data is needed, we, as PT practitioners, need to develop a skill set to generate interest in our work (see Binder, 1996). Development of resources, such as instructional manuals including video footage in PT, along with specific publications in areas such as early

intervention for children with autism are needed to sustain interest and foster growth. We look to the Standard Celeration Society to help provide the necessary environmental support. We also recognise that we have a personal responsibility to share our knowledge base and a professional responsibility to learn more from established practitioners so that PT will continue to grow.

For now, we are proud of our contribution to the PT literature. Smyth and Keenan consider how controlling the number of practice opportunities on component skills will affect compound skill acquisition and performance. McDowell and Keenan also consider teaching sequences using component-compound analysis. McDowell, Keenan, and Kerr compare levels of dysfluency on three tasks between students with Mild Learning Disabilities and typical students. In terms of sporting skill acquisition and maintenance, McDowell, McIntyre, Bones, and Keenan use PT to systematically improve the golf swing through fluency tuition. Cobane and Keenan focus on how specific practice affects positive and negative inners experienced by an elderly person throughout the day. Finally, Kerr, Campbell, and McCrory introduce The Saplings Model of Education and present learning pictures from three children in advocating for the use of PT with children with autism. The inclusion of a chart share also marks our commitment to presenting work in progress. It is hoped that the reader enjoys our contribution to the PT community and we look forward to establishing greater links in the future.

### REFERENCES

- Cooper, J. O. (1996). The Standard Celeration Society supports Precision Teachers. *Journal of Precision Teaching and Celeration*, 13(2), 4-5.
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