



MESSAGE FROM THE SPEC TEAM

Greetings from the Miami SPEC research team! Year Two was a productive year with our community partners, coursework, and sharing of our research data. Here are some highlights:

The SPEC course at UM is ongoing with participants completing their second term. The final course began September, 2009 and we will soon have our first SPEC graduates. Congratulations to our partner organizations.

Our SPECWAY.org website has been totally revamped. The site hosts SPEC related information pertaining to awareness, training, sustainability and research. This new portal promotes engagement and networking. [Sign-up for a free membership today.](#)

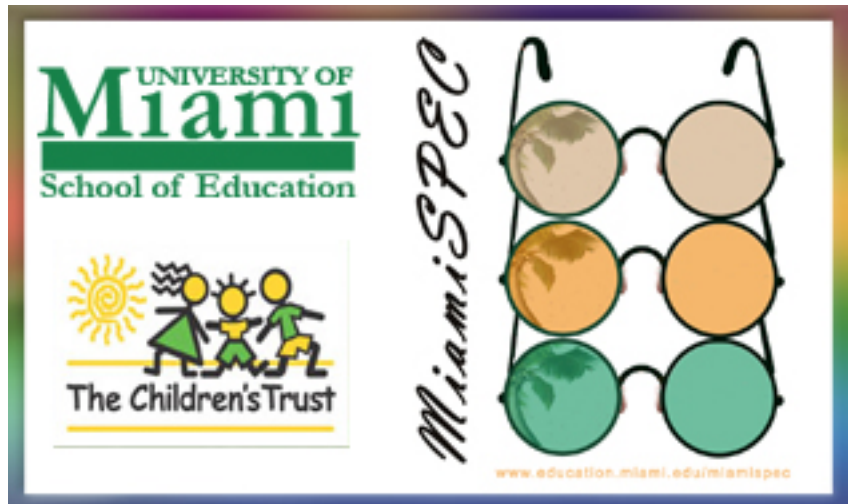
The Miami SPEC Research Team has been busy sharing the results of the first round of data collection with our partner organizations and research community. Each organization has received a report on their Year 1 research data and established a transformation team (T-team) to address organizational change based on those results. T-teams have begun to implement SPEC practices internally.

In excess of 15 presentations focusing on SPEC and organizational change were made locally, nationally and internationally by the members of our research team, including two which were made at the [Society for Community Research and Action](#) (Division 27 of the American Psychological Association) Biennial Conference in Montclair, New Jersey June 18-21, 2009. The first presentation was entitled, "Organizational Change for Justice and Wellbeing: The Miami SPEC Project". The second was entitled, "Miami SPECS: Changing Agents of Change, Steering Settings of Change".

The research team has also proposed a symposium, "Promoting Justice and Well-Being: Linking Personal, Organizational, and Community Change in Action Research" for the American Education Research Association (AERA) in Denver Colorado, April 30- May 4, 2010. In this symposium, our research team will make four key presentations on

various aspects of the Miami SPEC research project. [more...](#)

Currently, we are completing a manuscript for submission to the [Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community](#) (JPIC). This manuscript will focus on the preliminary findings of the project as well as explore organizational conditions necessary for SPEC practice. Finally, the research team received an award through the [University of Miami, Arshd Research in Ethics](#) to support the development of a tool to promote ethical-reflective community practice in human services organizations



SPEC RESEARCH RAFFLE WINNER 2009:
Michelle Paul of Community Health of South Florida, (CHI) with Erin Jamerson
T-team Chairperson

SAVE THE DATE November 30, 2009 8:30-Noon

"Promoting Strengths, Prevention, Empowerment and Community Change in Miami:
 Building a Sustainable Network"

Join us for an interactive and participatory workshop aimed at developing ideas for a sustainable [SPEC](#) Network

Seating is limited

RSVP to Debbie Noguerras at dnoqueras@miami.edu

<p style="text-align: center;">?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How can SPEC make a difference?</p>	STRENGTHS	PREVENTION	EMPOWERMENT	COMMUNITY CHANGE
	identifies and builds upon individual and community assets more...	identifies and reduces risk factors and promotes protective factors in individuals, families, groups, and communities more...	increases the power of individuals, groups, and entire communities more...	identifies the root causes of problems and creating new systems or structures that enhance citizen participation and well-being more...

Miami SPEC Project Updates:

The SPEC training cohort Participants are learning about:

- relationships between individuals and societal well-being
- knowledge of organizations and organizational change
- and practical skills for facilitating discussion and collaborative process.

The cohort is developing into what Lave and Wenger (1990) call a [community of practice](#). While each training session offers content with related readings and discussion (surrounding putting class concepts into action in their organizations), it is clear that the participants most value the collegiality, discussions and learning shared with the other participants.

In year three of the class, we intend to build on and nurture this community of practice model.

T-teams: At this stage of the project, all five organizations have established T-teams in their organizations and developed norms for participation and group process.

- Teams meet every two weeks on average for about ninety minutes.
- Teams are described as new organizational structures and the place where learning, reflection and honest and open dialogue can happen.
- The meetings provide support, protected space for dialogue, and opportunities for members to increase their understanding of organizational issues and strategies for improvement.
- T-teams are promoting group processes that are interactive and participatory.

Miami SPEC participants report that T-team members are developing facilitation, discussion, and collaboration skills; and in the process getting to "experience and be part of a collaborative environment".

Organizational Change: Broad participation brings invaluable perspectives and helps diffuse the change message through all departments in a given organization. Participating organizations are currently moving their learning out into their larger organizations; as they try to change the climate of participation and communication.

Lessons for Promoting SPEC Principles in Organizations:

Our first lesson is that the modest progress we have achieved in the first 20 months may be accounted for by the synergy of multiple strategies. The main strategy is our biweekly, three hour training sessions in which participants learn SPEC principles and practices and in which they build a cross-organization community of practice. We often hear participants comment on "how nice it is to have a place where we can think and reflect on our practice." The training meets several needs: intellectual curiosity, sense of belonging, common cause, sharing, professional development, and commitment. Recently, participants began planning for "life after the project." The group already contemplates ways of staying connected & sharing our learning.

The second lesson is about "balancing acts." Each T-team strives to achieve a balance among competing values: (a) attention to process versus attention to outcomes, (b) attention to dynamics within the T-team versus attention to organizational dynamics, (c) attention to internal organizational issues versus external practice in the community, (d) focus on a few specific issues to tackle versus focus on multiple yet unfocused issues, and finally (e) legitimacy of T-team to assert leadership over initiatives versus needing to obtain legitimacy from the entire organization for each decision. What we learned by observing these five balancing acts is that there isn't a formula for achieving the right balance, but that there is a need to surface these issues in the T-team so that the group may choose wisely and reflectively on its course of action.

The third and final lesson in this group refers to leader involvement. Without leader endorsement, participation and affirmation, projects of this kind do not go very far. Of the five participating organizations, two CEOs attend the training, along with senior staff from the remaining three organizations. For those in which the CEOs do not participate, we make it a point to keep them informed and involve them in quarterly meetings.

Well-being Premises

Individual well-being **cannot** be achieved in **isolation** from the **organizations** that affect our lives and the **communities** that we live in

The **most promising** approaches **combine multiple strategies** for **engaging personal, organizational and community change**.

[More....](#)

Contact us: THE MIAMI SPEC PROJECT TEAM

Researchers

[Dean Isaac Prilleltensky, Ph.D.](#)

[Scot Evans, Ph.D.](#)

[Randy Penfield, Ph.D.](#)

[Ora Prilleltensky, Ed.D.](#)

Project Directors

[Debbie J. Noguera, ARNP, Ph.D.](#)

Administration

[Adrine McKenzie Ph.D.](#) Research

Graduate Students

[Corrine Huggins, Nicholas Mescia,](#)

[Seth Christman, Elizabeth Baldwin](#)