Registration

07:00 - 17:00 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOYER

Pick Up Registration Packet and Conference Materials

President's Welcome Address - Opening Session

08:00 - 08:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Presentation type General Session
Stefanie Sorbet

Opening General Session - All Registered Conference Attendees are Invited to Attend

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Workforce Development

09:00 - 09:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Presentation type Discussion/Paper (Lecture)
Patricia Elmore

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167 Moving Up Instead of Out: Improving Social Capital and Upward Mobility in Children from Rural and Low-Income Homes.

Mr. Tucker Constable, Mr. Charles Prince, Dr. Patricia Elmore

Athens State University, Athens, AL, USA

Abstract

Our research objective is to study the state of upward mobility opportunities in rural and low-income areas in Alabama, as well as the opportunities present on college campuses, in order to see what can be made to aid students seeking to gain the necessary job and social skills required to plug themselves into networks that will aid them in their desire to move upward in society. For this research proposal, we would be using a mixed methods approach from the framework of Vygotsky's Social Development theory. While this theory is often more focused on young children, we would use it to explore the ways that social interaction and the more knowledgeable other allows for heightened social capital and higher ability for upward mobility.

Questions

- How available are upward mobility opportunities on college campuses in the state of Alabama?
- What trends do we notice?
- What can be done to further facilitate upward mobility in the student body across Alabama college campuses?

Preliminary or anticipated findings

Due to the popularity of sports programs in the state of Alabama, we believe that sports programs will be a main mode of establishing upward mobility among Alabama college students. Alabama has a prominent trade school presence with multiple co-op/work programs. We anticipate that these programs could possibly be another popular mode of establishing upward mobility. Finally, we anticipate that student organizations may provide an important role in creating networking and leadership opportunities.

Scholarly significance or anticipated contribution to the field

With this research we hope to contribute to the education and the upward social movement of students and community members within our state. We strive to see the opportunities we have been afforded be more widely provided for those who otherwise wouldn't have been able to take advantage of them. It would also be a goal to establish means of support for those whose avenues of upward mobility have been.

Anticipated progress or next steps prior to the Annual Meeting

We aim to begin our research, at the earliest, in Spring of 2026. We anticipate this start time due to the fact that we need to take IRB training. We hope to propose the study at the meeting and gain invaluable feedback that will help us carry out the study.

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76 Examining Career Advancement Challenges: A Multigenerational Perspective on Perceived Barriers Faced by Black Graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) in Louisiana

Dr. Martina Malone, Dr. Keicia Hawkins

Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, Louisiana, USA

Abstract

This dissertation addresses a critical gap in workforce equity research by examining the lived experiences of Black professionals across four generations who graduated from HBCUs and PWIs in Louisiana. Through 80+ hours of intimate interviews with 36 participants spanning from Baby Boomers to Generation Z, this study unveils the

persistent yet evolving barriers that continue to impede Black professional advancement.

The research reveals four powerful themes—**Readiness**, **Racism**, **Resistance**, and **Resiliency**—that illuminate how educational background and generational perspectives shape workplace experiences. While HBCU graduates demonstrated stronger cultural identity and confidence, they faced greater challenges adapting to predominantly White environments. PWI graduates showed easier workplace acclimation but lacked the robust sense of self reported by HBCU counterparts.

Most significantly, this study exposes the troubling continuity of workplace discrimination: from overt racism experienced by Baby Boomers to sophisticated microaggressions facing Generation Z. Participants consistently reported needing to outperform White colleagues while lacking crucial mentorship opportunities—a pattern transcending generations and educational backgrounds.

The findings carry profound implications for educational reform, workforce development, and organizational change. By amplifying marginalized voices and documenting systemic barriers through rigorous qualitative methodology, this research provides actionable insights for creating truly equitable workplaces.

This dissertation contributes essential knowledge to diversity and inclusion scholarship while honoring the resilience of Black professionals who paved pathways for future generations. It represents both meaningful academic contribution and important social research that illuminates pathways toward workplace equity and justice.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Teacher Education, Teaching Profession

09:00 - 09:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Presentation type Discussion/Paper (Lecture)
Tina Allen

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144 Exploring How General Education Elementary Teachers Successfully Support Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Instructionally and Environmentally: A Qualitative Interview Study

Ms. Ayana Samuel

MTSU, Murfreesboro, TN, USA

Abstract

Overview

This dissertation proposal is based on a qualitative study of teachers' environmental and instructional perceptions of the inclusion of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the General Education or Tier I classroom. All students, specifically including those with ASD in the regular education classroom, are part of IDEA, 2004 which gives students' rights to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). The reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the establishment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) necessitates the instruction of all students in the general education classroom whenever possible.

Statement of Problem

The number of students with ASD taught in inclusive classrooms is increasing (Wong et al., 2014, p. 1). ASD prevalence information is necessary for identifying community needs such as addressing disparities in identification and services. Statewide prevalence of ASD for ages 3–21 years in 2018 ranged from 1.5% in Tennessee (Shaw et al., 2023).

Although there are many benefits and challenges of creating and sustaining inclusive classrooms, including access to general education curricula and opportunities for numerous peer interactions, the inclusive classroom can present multiple challenges for students with ASD and their teachers. Due to deficits in social communication and interaction, navigating peer relationships and other classroom social situations can be very difficult for students with ASD (National Research Council, 2001).

According to CDC (2021), 1 in 44 children are identified with autism spectrum disorder (CDC, 2021). In 2000, it was unknown why the prevalence of autism was increasing at such a rapid rate compared to previous years (Rushworth, 2016). Currently, the development of the identification of autism resources, the advancement of research and technology, and the ability to detect autism at an early age are all contributing factors to the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder increasing (CDC, 2021).

Study Context

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand general education elementary teachers' successful instructional and environmental supports of the inclusion of students with ASD. The context for this study was a school district in the southern geographical region of the United States (US). The research study will emerge in the school districts of the Middle Tennessee region of the United States. The district, located in a city with approximately 170,000 residents, consists of thirteen schools, ranging from kindergarten through sixth grade, with about 9,000 students. For purposes of this study, the school district that was selected consisted of specifically 9,340+ students. Each school in the district has a principal and one to two assistant

principals, depending on the size of the school. In this study, four schools will be chosen based on teacher responses to a series of open-ended interview questions. Each school will be a public elementary K-6th grade school. Teachers selected will currently have worked with students with ASD in their general education classroom or Tier I at least 80% of the time or more. Each school within this school district has been identified as having at least one student with ASD. From these schools, teachers who have students with ASD in their general education classrooms at least 80% of the time or more will be invited to join the study and participate in a semi-structured interview.

The context of the study is a qualitative interview study. An interview study "is a type of research that involves in-depth contextual study of a person, people, issue and place within a predetermined scope of the study" (p. 26)). Which may also involve collective a case study "studying several cases within the same project" (Stake, 1995, p.169). Within the case study, the researcher will examine the perspectives of elementary teachers' perceptions including students with ASD in the general education classroom and Tier I and how the student is instructionally and environmentally supported. The participants will be involved in teacher interviews and the researcher will examine teacher beliefs, potential biases, mindsets, challenges, and frustrations around strategies for supporting students with autism instructionally and environmentally in the general education classroom and Tier I. The interview study will examine how the participants make meaning of their daily experiences by using a constructivist view (Bhattacharya, 2017).

Statement of Problem

Challenging behaviors such as, such as stereotypies, aggression, property destruction, and self-injury are also commonly observed in persons with ASD (Horner et al. 2002; Militerni et al. 2002). Further, those individuals with both ID and ASD are at greater risk for developing challenging behaviors (Rojahn et al. 2004). Unfortunately, general educators have consistently expressed misgivings about teaching children with autism because they do not believe they have received such training; therefore, they do not believe they are adequately prepared to address these students' diverse needs (Schumm & Vaughn, 1991).

Research Question

How do general education teachers, who have had success with ASD support these student in the classroom instructionally and environmentally?

Significance of Study

This study aims to provide helpful insights into how and why general education elementary teachers interact and support their students with ASD instructionally and environmentally. This study also aims to understand these teachers' level of preparedness to give students the equitable education they deserve. General Education teachers and their impact on the learning of students with ASD. In the context of other

relevant literature, this project's implication for teacher perception and preparedness is significant because "there is a compelling need to improve the preparation of teachers required to serve these students" (Busby, Ingram, Bowron, Oliver, & Lyons, 2012, p. 29). While other studies have focused on placement in the general education classroom, this research focuses on drawing from these educator insights in order to make meaning and provide strategies for implementing successful inclusionary practices that are known and less known. (Harrison et al, 2005).

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9 Predicting Teacher Mental Health: The Influence of Demographics, Support, and Policy Contexts

Dr. David Marshall[1,2], Dr. Tim Pressley[3], Dr. Katelyn Nelson[1,2], Ms. Nancy Carballo[1,2]

[1]Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA. [2]Plains Research Consortium, Auburn, AL, USA. [3]Christopher Newport University, Newport News, VA, USA

Abstract

Teacher mental health has a significant impact on educator performance, student outcomes, and the overall school climate. While research broadly acknowledges this relationship, there remains limited understanding of how demographic characteristics, professional support, and recent policy changes specifically influence teacher mental well-being. In the context of ongoing post-pandemic adjustments and emerging educational technologies, our study addresses a critical gap by examining factors predicting teacher mental health.

This exploratory quantitative study surveyed 672 PK-12 teachers across the United States, utilizing hierarchical multiple regression analysis to identify the extent to which individual demographics, school contexts, professional support, and comfort with generative artificial intelligence (AI) impact teacher mental health. We specifically sought to understand mental health outcomes five years following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a period marked by considerable stress and transformation within educational settings.

Key findings from our analyses indicate significant positive relationships between teacher mental health and several factors. Notably, professional support emerged as the strongest predictor, with administrative (b=1.321, p<.001), colleague (b=.775, p<.001), and parental support, particularly in managing student discipline (b=.350, p=.036), each contributing positively to mental well-being. These findings underscore the essential role of interpersonal and institutional support in promoting mental health, suggesting that supportive leadership, collaborative peer relationships,

and active family involvement create a robust framework conducive to teacher well-being.

Additionally, demographic variables highlighted intriguing results. Black teachers reported significantly better mental health outcomes compared to their White counterparts (b=1.235, *p*=.008). Teachers working in hybrid or microschool contexts also demonstrated significantly higher mental health (b=1.599, *p*=.037), suggesting that smaller, flexible educational environments may inherently provide greater autonomy, reduced administrative burdens, and stronger community alignment, thus enhancing teacher well-being.

Comfort with emerging educational technologies also positively correlated with teacher mental health (b=.243, *p*=.007). This result indicates that teachers adept at integrating AI into their instructional practices may benefit psychologically by efficiently managing routine teaching tasks and reducing stress related to technological adaptation.

Our study provides actionable insights for educational policymakers, school administrators, and teacher educators. Recommendations include targeted professional development emphasizing administrative leadership skills, peer mentorship programs, structured parental engagement initiatives, and comprehensive training in emerging technologies like AI. By strategically enhancing these support mechanisms, education leaders can effectively address teacher mental health, ultimately fostering stable, resilient school environments.

This research contributes significantly to educational research by delineating clear, practical pathways for enhancing teacher mental health, a critical component of educational effectiveness and sustainability. As schools navigate post-pandemic challenges and technological innovations, prioritizing teacher well-being emerges as both a moral imperative and a pragmatic necessity.

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212 Teachers' Thinking: A Conundrum that Needs to be Researched

Dr. Franco Zengaro, Dr. Sally Zengaro

Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL, USA

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative empirical study was to investigate the role of reflection and identity creation in a convenience sample of 19 preservice teachers enrolled in a teacher education course. We utilized teachers' thinking and constructivism as the theoretical frameworks.

We do not know if teachers' thinking can be a reliable source of knowledge when it comes to preservice teachers' identity construction. Nevertheless, teachers' thinking and reflection are important areas of research.

A group of 19 preservice teachers attending a university participated in the study. The participants were asked to respond to two basic questions: 1) How do you describe yourself as a former student? 2) How do you describe yourself as a future teacher? Data were collected over one college semester. The participants were asked to respond to the following prompts. As a student, I was ___, and as a Teacher, I want to be ____ . The statements of the participants were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2021) thematic analysis.

The following themes emerged through qualitative analysis. As a student, I was unmotivated and uninterested; as a teacher, I want to be a motivator and care for my students.

In conclusion, participants in this study identified areas that they needed to improve. However, as teachers, they felt that they can make a positive impact on their students. This study underscores the importance of conducting qualitative empirical research.

Position Paper - Impacting the Classroom: How Leadership Drives Lasting Achievement in Tomball ISD

09:00 - 09:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Presentation type Position Paper
Michael Webb

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112 Impacting the Classroom: How Leadership Drives Lasting Achievement in Tomball ISD

Dr. Michael A Webb[1], Dr. Rod Uzat[2]

[1]Tomball ISD, Tomball, TX, USA. [2]University of Texas - Permian Basin, Odessa, Texas, USA

Abstract

The pursuit of increased student achievement is an important and difficult task for district leaders. In their governance capacities, boards face the challenge of using their

mission and strategic planning to focus teacher efforts on student achievement in meaningful ways. Today's curriculum leaders encounter implementation problems which include integrating new technologies with real-world experiential learning, and balancing knowledge-based development with process and skill-based development. Pak et al. (2020) argued these challenges are both technical (assessing materials, establishing alignment, defining scope and sequence, developing unit guides and rubrics) and adaptive (collaboratively planning and experimenting) (Pak et al., 2020).

In Texas, one illustration of this can be seen in the state's test results where 51% of students fell short of grade level standards in 2022-23 (Anderson, 2023). However, Tomball ISD, a fast-growth school district of approximately 24,000 students northwest of Houston has maintained the state's highest academic rating for over a decade through a curriculum leadership that employs a balance of technical and adaptive approaches supported by a Superintendent and Board of Trustees that has prioritized curriculum development in its strategic plan.

Using a case study profile, this paper will discuss four closely held practices:

1. Teachers deliver instruction from a collaboratively developed instructional-design template and not a scripted curriculum. Collaborative teams and teachers operate within a framework of district developed Unit Guides and Scope and Sequences to deliver customized instruction based on individual student needs.

2. All campus master schedules allow for collaborative planning throughout all grade levels and content areas. Oftentimes, teachers can feel alone on an island. Tomball ISD, views teachers as instructional designers with collaborative needs.

3. The curriculum functions based on tenants that are tightly held (i.e., district developed) and loosely held (i.e., campus developed). Clear expectations for enactment of the curriculum provides guidance and support to teachers and campus leaders. Teachers and teacher teams design instruction collaboratively and individually in accordance with the district developed curriculum plan. Teacher innovation and flexibility in "how" curriculum is delivered on a daily basis (i.e., planning, differentiation, scaffolding, etc.) is a guiding principle. The "what" of curriculum, however, is a district-level decision that all teachers and principals are expected to follow and includes district developed assessment, grading guidelines and the identification of best practice exemplars.

4. The curriculum development is prioritized throughout the district's five-year Strategic Plan process. In its recently completed strategic plan titled, "Exceeding Excellence 2030" the district prioritized curriculum innovation through the use of artificial intelligence and other instructional frameworks to sustain the success of the district.

The article will close with recommendations for how this model can be replicated in other districts and how to overcome common implementation challenges.

Anderson, A. (2023). *Texas Education Agency releases 'disappointing' performance results.* Texas

Scorecard. https://texasscorecard.com/state/texas-education-agency-releases-disappointing-performance-results/

Pak, K., Polikoff, M. S., Desimone, L. M., & Saldívar García, E. (2020). The adaptive challenges of

curriculum implementation: Insights for educational leaders driving standards-based

reform. *Aera Open*, *6*(2), https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858420932828

Training - Connecting the Dots: Using Data to Align and Transform Educator Preparation

09:00 - 09:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Presentation type Training
Chandar Lewis

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230 Connecting the Dots: Using Data to Align and Transform Educator Preparation

Dr. Chandar Lewis[1], Dr. Shayla Roberts[2], Ms. Karen Duncan[2], Dr. Shelia Kenny[3]

[1]Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, USA. [2]Bethune-Cookman University, Daytona Beach, FL, USA. [3]LeMoyne-Owen College, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

In today's evolving educational landscape, educator preparation programs must adopt a comprehensive, data-driven approach to meet the diverse needs of learners from PreK to adulthood. This interactive session shows how data can be strategically used to improve and align teacher preparation, especially in key areas like classroom

management, reading instruction, and support for English language learners (ELLs), as well as to enhance program accreditations.

Participants will explore how preparation programs can integrate various data sources—such as candidate performance metrics, field experience feedback, licensure assessments, and graduate impact studies—to enhance instruction in high-need areas. Focus will be on using data to improve how teachers are trained to manage diverse classrooms, deliver effective reading interventions, and support multilingual learners, including adult ESOL students.

Through case examples, collaborative activities, and a customizable framework, attendees will learn how to connect the dots among institutional goals, candidate preparation, and student outcomes. This session is ideal for faculty, program leaders, and certification coordinators seeking to build responsive, equity-centered systems that improve educator effectiveness across both traditional and nontraditional certification pathways.

By the end of the session, participants will have acquired practical tools for using data to encourage innovation and improvement in educator preparation programs that serve learners at all levels, from early childhood through adult education.

Symposium - In the Face of Challenges: Why Teachers Stay

09:00 - 09:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Mary Giles

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77 In the Face of Challenges: Why Teachers Stay

Dr. Mary Giles, Dr. Austin Ferrell

University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, Tennessee, USA

Abstract

There continues to be a national shortage of teachers. Many states have implemented various programs to help increase their pool of teachers. However, these efforts have significantly impacted the hiring of teachers while also increasing the challenges of being a teacher. Many teachers find themselves pondering the question: Should I leave, or should I stay? While numerous factors contribute to teachers' turnover, there are

meaningful and authentic reasons teachers remain in the profession. Teaching is one of the most rewarding and impactful careers. They model strategies that build students' self-confidence, communication, curiosity, resilience, literacy, and a wide range of other essential skills. Teaching is more than a job; it is a calling. Effective teachers often stay in spite of challenges. Have you ever felt defeated as a teacher? What influenced your decision to stay in the profession?

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Policy, Program Evaluation, Measurement

09:00 - 09:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Rod Uzat

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32 Contract Chaos: Navigating Working Conditions and Workload Expectations in Union and Non-Union Teacher Contracts

Ms. Kari Smith-Murphy

Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA

Abstract

As teacher attrition continues to rise, attention is increasingly being paid to the structural factors that influence educator workload and job satisfaction. Among these factors, contractual language—especially regarding workload expectations—plays a critical role in shaping the professional experiences of teachers. Yet there remains limited research comparing how workload expectations are defined and operationalized in teacher contracts across unionized and non-unionized states. This study addresses that gap through a qualitative content analysis of teacher contracts and board policies from ten states, seeking to answer the research question: RQ1: *How do workload expectations differ between unionized and non-unionized states?*

Using a document analysis approach, this study examines teacher contracts from five states with strong collective bargaining protections and five from states with no or limited union rights. States were selected based on the Fordham Institute's national rankings of union strength. Contracts and policies were sourced from the largest school district in each selected state and analyzed using a twelve-category codebook developed to capture key dimensions of teacher workload. These included: workday length, planning time, workload, class size, lunch, subbing, lesson plans, student behavior-related duties, extracurricular/after-hours responsibilities, general duties, course preparations, and additional miscellaneous workload indicators. Documents

were coded using inductive and deductive methods, and themes were compared across unionized and non-unionized contexts.

Findings revealed that unionized districts generally offered more detailed and enforceable language across nearly all workload categories. For instance, planning time, duty-free lunch, subbing protections, and class size limits were consistently present in union contracts but less common or more ambiguous in non-union board policies. Union contracts also more frequently included provisions for overload remedies—such as stipends, added support staff, or workload adjustments—when contractual thresholds were exceeded. In contrast, non-union policies often featured vague expectations, leaving room for administrative discretion and potential overreach. Notably, both union and non-union settings showed limited attention to course preparation load (“preps”) and behavioral workload, despite literature linking these to increased stress and burnout. After-hours expectations such as evening events were frequently listed without provisions for compensatory time or additional pay.

Overall, the analysis highlights significant variations in how workload expectations are formalized across labor contexts. While unionized settings tend to provide greater contractual clarity and protection, non-union environments often rely on more discretionary language, which can result in uneven implementation and higher perceived workloads. This lack of uniformity has important implications for teacher satisfaction, workload equity, and retention. In an era of widespread teacher shortages, these findings point to the need for clearer, enforceable workload provisions in both contracts and district policies—particularly in non-union states where legal protections may be limited.

This study contributes to ongoing conversations around educational policy, labor equity, and workforce sustainability. By illuminating how workload is constructed at the policy level, this research provides a foundation for evidence-based recommendations aimed at improving teacher working conditions through more transparent and equitable contract design.

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189 Value-Added to Superintendent Candidate Mentorship via Synchronous Meetings

Dr. Rod Uzat

UTPB, Odessa, Texas, USA

Abstract

Across America, public school leaders are having to navigate relationships with their stakeholders where confidence and trust has been eroded due to conflicts over school district decisions regarding the return to full time in person instruction, the implementation of some policies related to transgender students, the use of controversial curriculum materials and/or library reading materials, the implementation of policies related to the confidentiality of school counseling of students concerning pregnancy and gender identification matters, freedom of expression questions and various other issues. Understandably, this heightened conflict has resulted in a decline in the number of teachers and campus administrators interested in serving as superintendents.

As well, superintendent certification programs have moved heavily towards an asynchronous online format, limiting personal contact at the very time that more responsive and personal interaction could be helpful. What if superintendent preparation programs leveraged online videoconferencing, synchronous sessions and authentic experience-based discussions as the foundation for raising the level of personal service in order to better deliver on mentoring for their candidates? Would such efforts build the sort of supportive relationships and familiarity between candidates and instructional staff that make for effective mentoring and career counseling?

This study will look at the use of pre-planned synchronous meetings and personal one-to-one sessions across the delivery of the four graduate courses that make up the superintendent certification program at one university in Texas. These synchronous meetings will be evaluated and analyzed for the degree to which they added value to the key elements of effective mentoring as found in research. The key elements of effective mentoring include, “(1) open communication and accessibility; (2) goals and challenges; (3) passion and inspiration; (4) caring personal relationship; (5) mutual respect and trust; (6) exchange of knowledge; (7) independence and collaboration; and (8) role modeling,” (Eller et al., 2014, p.4). Past candidates of the program will be surveyed on Likert scale items that use specific descriptions of mentor-protégé interactions found in the research of Eller et al. (2014). Additionally, for each key element one open-ended response will be included in the survey for qualitative analysis. Finally, one Likert scale item and one open-ended response item will attempt to evaluate the relative impact of each key mentoring element on a candidate’s willingness to engage in career counseling.

The study will close with implications for mentorship in the superintendency as well as any noted meaningful connections between the key mentoring elements studied that may be leveraged to enhance program quality or sustain supportive relationships for the candidates enduring beyond program completion.

Eller, L. S., Lev, E. L., & Feurer, A. (2014). Key components of an effective mentoring

relationship: a qualitative study. Nurse education today, 34(5), 815–820. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2013.07.020

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109 The Measurement of Student Engagement Factors Among First-Year Student Success

Dr. Jarrod Benjamin, Dr. Walter Brown

Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, USA

Abstract

This study analyzes secondary data from the 2022 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to investigate the relationship between student engagement and first-year success at four-year institutions. Using George Kuh's (2009) theoretical framework, a quantitative approach examines the impact of factors such as faculty interactions, extracurricular participation, and enriching educational experiences on retention, academic performance, and collaborative learning. Responses from 44,274 first-year students were analyzed using regression and correlation techniques in SPSS.

Key findings show that active engagement with faculty and involvement in campus organizations significantly predict retention, with students being 0.898 to 1.528 times more likely to return. Extracurricular involvement demonstrated a weak positive correlation with collaborative learning behaviors ($r=0.12$ $r=0.12$ to 0.200.20, $p<.001$ $p<.001$). However, excessive involvement was weakly negatively correlated with retention intentions ($r=-0.05$ $r=-0.05$, $p<.001$ $p<.001$), possibly due to time management challenges. Enriching educational experiences, such as tutoring and advising, were linked to a 1.215 to 1.280 times greater likelihood of retention.

These results highlight the multidimensional nature of student engagement—encompassing cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects—as key predictors of academic success and persistence. The study emphasizes the need for balanced engagement strategies that are tailored to the diverse needs of students. Recommendations include enhancing faculty-student interactions, providing structured extracurricular opportunities, and expanding academic support services to promote student success during the crucial first year of college.

RiP Lecture - Higher Education

10:00 - 10:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Lecture)
Earlisha Whitfield

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236 From Access to Attainment: A Data-Driven Study of Grant Aid and Community College Success

Mr. Christopher Blackmon

University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Abstract

Introduction

Higher education access for millions of students, especially those from low-income backgrounds and first-generation and underrepresented communities, is provided by Community colleges. Higher education institutions have faced growing obstacles in student access alongside rising expenses and declining retention and completion rates throughout the last two decades. The economic fluctuations together with shifting policy priorities and changing financial aid structures have intensified existing challenges at these institutions. The Pell Grant program along with other federal financial aid initiatives functions to remove financial obstacles that prevent low-income students from pursuing education. The program has raised concerns about its capability to support students in their educational journey from entry through graduation.

This dissertation proposal presents a three-article study which examines how financial aid impacts community college results across different time periods. The research evaluates student access patterns and completion rates together with retention rates by studying financial aid policy changes and economic conditions through two separate time frames from 2007-2012 and 2017–2023.

Problem Statement(s)[aw1]

The main purpose of financial aid programs [aw2] is to support students through monetary difficulties, yet these institutions continue to struggle with low student retention rates. The existing scientific research base does not provide adequate information about how various forms and levels of financial aid influence student term-to-term persistence.

Community colleges function as fundamental entry points to higher education but their enrollment numbers have dropped substantially throughout the last twenty years. Higher education affordability faces challenges because tuition costs are increasing and grant aid distributions remain unpredictable, especially affecting students from low-income backgrounds.

Past studies investigated these elements independently but their combined impact on accessibility remains unexplained. This study investigates enrollment patterns and price changes and financial support developments across two essential time spans from 2007–2008 to 2011–2012 and 2017-2018 to 2022-2023 to determine financial factors affecting community college access.

The period of economic transformation brought about rising tuition costs alongside decreased enrollment at community colleges. The investigation requires data to establish if rising educational costs along with changing grant programs have blocked or hindered student access to higher education.

The rising availability of federal Pell Grant financial aid does not solve the ongoing issue of low student completion rates in community colleges. The effectiveness of Pell Grant funding to support degree completion among disadvantaged students remains uncertain.

The relationship between Pell Grant funding and community college completion rates remains poorly understood because researchers lack sufficient data to demonstrate the connection. Policy makers along with educators require this understanding to develop better student outcomes and optimize financial aid strategies.

A subsidiary purpose of this research [aw3] is to understand Pell Grant funding effects on student completion rates at community colleges through predictive analysis. The study investigates if Pell Grant funding functions as a predictive factor for degree or certificate completion through financial aid distribution pattern evaluation of student outcomes.

This study will provide data that will assist federal financial aid program operators and educational institutions to develop improved student success initiatives.

Literature Review

Kennamer's "The Moving Target: Student Financial Aid and Community College Student Retention" serves as the primary research basis for this investigation from 2010. The research analyzed student enrollment patterns across the six-year intervals from 2001-2006 to 2005-2006 to understand how institutional characteristics along with location and economic factors affected student enrollment. The Kennemer study explored student aid distribution and unmet financial need while showing how fair funding and policy solutions help solve access and affordability issues. This article serves as the base research for my study, yet I have acquired additional relevant

articles to support my investigation. All referenced articles are from peer reviewed academic journals.

A study with similar data analysis would be performed but I would focus on two crucial time periods which demonstrate both national Pell funding increases and decreases and the period just before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe my research would produce significant and useful results.

Methodology

Descriptive Statistics

The primary sources of data will be IPEDS data targeting:

1. Student financial aid (SFA) component for Pell Grant data.
2. Enrollment component for retention rates
3. Graduate rates and Outcome measures for completion data
4. Institutional designations for control variables (urban, rural, size of institution, etc.)

Data Sources: Student records collected from multiple community colleges spanning both the period of rising Pell grants in 2007-2008 and the period of declining Pell grants in 2011-2012 and the period of 2017-2018 and 2022-2023.

The research design will be a quantitative using a casual-comparative design to compare retention and completion rates between institutions with different levels of Pell Grant funding or student Pell participation.

Statistical tests will include correlational analysis, multiple regression, group comparisons (t-tests, One-way ANOVA) and possibly propensity score matching.

Results

While this study has yet to be conducted, we can anticipate several results:

- Inconsistent or insufficient financial aid is likely correlated with lower student retention, especially among lower income students.
- Community college enrollment is declining, especially post-2020 due to increased cost of living, stagnant or declining public funding and labor market incentives to work instead of enrolling.
- Higher Pell Grant awards are likely positively correlated with increased completion rates, especially for full-time students.

Implications

- Increase in Pell Grant funding and tie it to the real cost of attendance, including living expenses.
- Reinforcing and expanding state-level need-based aid programs to supplement Pell Grants.

Conclusion

Ultimately, this research affirms that efforts to improve community college outcomes must go beyond access and enrollment. They must be accompanied by a commitment to financial equity, institutional support, and targeted policy reform. Without these changes, the promise of community college as a pathway to socioeconomic mobility will remain out of reach for many of the very students it aims to serve.

[aw1]Put in an introduction (5-8 sentences) to tell the reader where the presentation is going.

[aw2]Conclude the introduction with a problem statement telling the reader what is going wrong that needs to be fixed (5-8 sentences)

[aw3]A subsidiary purpose of this study

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70 Do we matter here? Black women nursing students' experiences of mattering at a majority-Black campus

-- Audrey Ross

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Abstract

Research Problem or Objectives

This dissertation study explores how Black college women enrolled in a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at a majority-Black, private, nonprofit university in the U.S. South experience mattering within their institutional context. Responding to both the invisibility of Black women in higher education research and the dominance of narrow, outcome-based success metrics, this study aims to center the voices and realities of Black women in nursing education. The study also seeks to challenge dominant narratives that position Black women as "model minorities" and instead

explores what holistic success and mattering mean in a context shaped by interlocking systems of oppression.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The study is grounded in Black Feminist Thought (Collins, 2000). This framework guides the study's epistemological stance, emphasizing lived experience, situated knowledge, and the structural nature of oppression. Mattering is used as a central analytic lens, not merely as a psychological construct but as a socio-political and institutional phenomenon that interrogates how institutions recognize, affirm, or erase Black women's full humanity.

Research Questions and Relevant Literature

Primary questions:

1. What experiences do Black college women nursing students in a private, nonprofit institution on a majority-Black campus in the U.S. South find salient?
2. How do these women experience mattering—or not mattering—at their institution?

Relevant literature includes Black feminist epistemologies (Collins, 2000), intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and critiques of belonging and model minority myths in higher education (Porter, 2022; Commodore et al., 2018; Patton & Croom, 2016).

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

The study uses Sista Circle Methodology (Johnson, 2015), a culturally congruent, Black feminist approach to data collection rooted in collective meaning-making, dialogue, and relational accountability. Sista circles create communal space for Black women to share narratives, challenge marginalization, and engage in shared reflection. Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis grounded in Black feminist epistemology.

Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

Participants were recruited from (pseudonym) South Metro University (SMU) , a small, private, non-residential, career-focused university. Eligible participants were Black or African American women and enrolled in the BSN program scheduled to graduate in December 2025. Several small sista circles will be held though each participants will engage in one virtual sista circle, and interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and prepared for analysis.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Although data has yet to be collected at this time, I anticipate to find that participants are navigating complex experiences of institutional invisibility. Initial narratives could reflect

emotional labor, caregiving burdens, and racialized gender expectations that shape their educational journeys. Participants may describe moments of partial or marginal mattering, where their presence is acknowledged but their needs and voices remain unrecognized.

Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution to the Field

This study contributes to higher education research by centering Black women's experiences through an epistemologically aligned methodology and analytic lens. It challenges dominant narratives of success and offers a nuanced understanding of mattering in institutional life. It also expands the use of Sista Circle Methodology in nursing education, an under-researched field for Black feminist inquiry. The findings are expected to inform equity-centered policy, culturally responsive support strategies, and critical theoretical development in educational research.

Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Prior to the Annual Meeting

The next stage involves conducting the sista circles and completing transcript analysis using Black feminist-informed thematic coding. Member reflections and follow-up conversations will be used to ensure fidelity to participants' narratives and co-construct meaning. I will draft the findings chapter, engage in peer debriefing, and integrate participant voices through counternarratives. A working paper draft of preliminary findings and implications will be prepared for presentation at the Annual Meeting.

Key References

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58 Effects of Stress and Time Management Education on First-Level Nursing Students

Ms. Kelli Rachal, Dr. Christy Hornsby

Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches, La, USA

Abstract

1. Research Problem

Previous studies on time management in higher education have demonstrated its positive effects on student performance, mental well-being, and professional preparedness (Günaydin, 2022). However, limited research specifically examines the role of time management training in nursing education and its direct impact on clinical and academic outcomes. Given the demanding nature of nursing programs, it is essential to explore whether structured training sessions can equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in both their coursework and clinical practice. This study aims to address this gap by implementing a structured time management training program for first level nursing students and assessing its impact on their academic and clinical performance. By examining students' experiences before, during, and after the training, this research seeks to provide insights into how time management education can be effectively integrated into nursing curricula to better support student success.

2. Theoretical Framework

Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how structured time management training can lead to meaningful and lasting change in nursing students’ academic and clinical performance. Transformative

learning occurs when individuals critically reflect on their existing beliefs, assumptions, and habits, leading to a fundamental shift in their thinking and behavior (Rojo et al., 2023). This study aligns with Mezirow's theory by positing that nursing students who engage in time management training will reevaluate their current time management practices, recognize inefficiencies, and adopt new strategies that improve their ability to balance coursework, clinical responsibilities, and personal life.

3. Research Questions

The first research question that will guide this study is, "How does the integration of time management training in nursing education influence the ability of nursing students to manage stress and improve their academic performance?" The second research question that will guide this study is, "How does the integration of time management training in nursing education influence the ability of nursing students to manage stress and improve their clinical performance?"

4 and 5. Methodology and Data Source

This study will utilize a qualitative research design to explore the impact of time management training on the academic and clinical performance of first-level nursing students. A total of six students (three male, three female) will voluntarily participate in the study, providing a balanced representation of perspectives. The research will focus on understanding their experiences with time management and how structured training sessions influence their ability to manage stress, balance coursework with clinical responsibilities, and enhance their overall performance.

To achieve this, the study will incorporate three structured training sessions during one academic semester, scheduled at the beginning, middle, and end of the term. Each session will last approximately one hour and will cover various time management strategies, including prioritization, scheduling, goal setting, and task delegation. The sessions will provide practical tools and guidance to help students develop effective time management habits throughout their nursing education. These sessions will not only provide theoretical knowledge but will also include practical exercises, allowing students to apply what they learn to their academic and clinical responsibilities. In addition to the training sessions, data will be collected through short surveys administered at each check-in point. The surveys will consist of questions that utilize a mix of Likert scale items to measure perceived changes in time management effectiveness and stress levels, as well as open-ended questions to gather qualitative insights on how students apply these strategies in their academic and clinical settings. This mixed-method approach will enable a more comprehensive understanding of students' progress and challenges over time. Beyond survey data, students' qualitative feedback will be analyzed to identify common themes related to time management and its effects on academic success, clinical decision-making, stress management, and overall well-being. By examining individual experiences and trends across participants, this study will provide a nuanced understanding of how structured time management

training influences students' confidence, efficiency, and resilience in high-pressure environments.

6. Preliminary or Anticipated findings

This study hypothesizes that nursing students who receive formal education in time management strategies, such as prioritization, scheduling, goal setting, and task delegation, will demonstrate lower levels of stress, anxiety, and burnout compared to those who do not receive such training. Additionally, students with access to stress management education are expected to report higher levels of emotional well-being, improved academic performance, and enhanced clinical decision-making skills in the clinical setting.

7. Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it addresses a critical yet often overlooked factor in nursing education – time management and its influence on nursing students' academic performance, clinical efficiency, and stress management. Nursing programs are highly demanding, requiring students to juggle coursework, clinical rotations, assignments, and personal responsibilities. Poor time management can lead to overwhelming stress, negatively affecting students' ability to retain information, perform effectively in clinical settings, and maintain overall well-being. By integrating structured time management training, this study explores a potential solution to these challenges, providing valuable insights into how improved time management can enhance both academic success and clinical preparedness.

8. Anticipated Progress

The qualitative nature of this study will allow for an in-depth exploration of students' personal experiences, challenges, and progress over time. By analyzing the responses, this study aims to identify common themes related to time management and its effects on academic success, clinical decision-making, and overall well-being. This study will offer valuable recommendations for enhancing nursing curricula, ultimately supporting students in developing the skills needed for success in both academic and professional settings. The researcher aims to conduct all training sessions by December of 2025.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Technology

10:00 - 10:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Presentation type Discussion/Paper (Lecture)
Keicia Hawkins

62 Breaking the Frame: 360-Degree Video as a Tool for Enhanced Formative 20Assessment Observation in Teacher Education

Dr. Jessica Herring-Watson, Ms. Kayla Waters, Dr. Jason Trumble

University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

Introduction

Traditional video observations in teacher education limit preservice teachers to fixed perspectives, constraining their ability to observe comprehensive classroom dynamics. This design case explores how 360-degree video technology can enhance preservice teachers' observation and assessment skills by providing immersive, learner-directed viewing experiences that overcome limitations of both 2D video and live classroom observations.

Significance

Effective formative assessment requires teachers to simultaneously monitor multiple classroom interactions, a complex skill challenging to develop through conventional observation methods. 360-degree video offers unique affordances: complete environmental context, learner-directed exploration, and enhanced presence that creates a "being there" feeling. This technology addresses practical constraints in teacher education, including scheduling conflicts with K-12 schools and the need to minimize classroom disruptions while maximizing observation opportunities for large cohorts of preservice teachers.

Methods

Using an iterative design-based research approach, we developed and refined a structured 360-degree video observation activity across two semesters in an undergraduate Classroom Assessment course (N=53 total students: 38 fall, 15 spring). The activity focused on identifying formative assessment practices in a recorded high school graphic design lesson. We maintained detailed design journals, recorded weekly design meetings, and collected student feedback through Qualtrics surveys aligned with InTASC Standards and state teaching competencies.

The initial design included three video viewings (unguided exploration, formative assessment focus, technology reflection), but based on first-iteration feedback indicating student fatigue, we streamlined to two focused viewings in the second iteration. We also added explicit technological modeling and structured guidance protocols.

Findings

Student feedback revealed four key affordances of 360-degree video: comprehensive classroom views enabling observation of multiple simultaneous interactions, multiple perspectives unavailable in traditional formats, student-centered observation opportunities allowing "fly on the wall" perspectives, and greater autonomy in directing attention to areas of interest. Preservice teachers successfully identified multiple formative assessment strategies, with Turn-and-Talk activities and teacher monitoring being most commonly recognized. The second iteration showed improved engagement and more sophisticated analysis, with 85% rating the activity as effective. Students developed adaptive strategies including split-screen note-taking and varied navigation approaches. Technical challenges included video quality concerns and some navigation difficulties, while design successes included enhanced observation capabilities and critical evaluation skills development.

Discussion

Our iterative design process highlighted critical considerations for implementing immersive technologies in teacher education. Success required balancing structured guidance with exploratory freedom. In alignment with previous research, completely unguided exploration proved less effective than explicit modeling followed by independent interaction (Barnhart & van Es, 2015; Luna & Sherin, 2017). The technology enhanced traditional observation by allowing preservice teachers to notice student behaviors and interactions that practicing teachers might miss during live instruction. Key design principles emerged: provide clear technological prerequisites and modeling, maintain accessibility through multiple navigation options, focus viewing experiences rather than allowing unlimited exploration, and ensure high-quality recording to maximize learning potential.

This design case contributes to growing literature on immersive technologies in education by documenting specific implementation strategies and design decisions. Future research should explore scalability across different methods courses and investigate long-term impacts on preservice teachers' observational skills development in field placements.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - School Improvement, Technology-Based Learning

10:00 - 10:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
Presentation type Discussion/Paper (Lecture)
Kasey Warren

240 Adoption and Utilization of AI in the Development of an Intervention Integration Plan for Performance Improvement

Dr. Byron Havard, Dr. Lauren Adlof

University of West Florida, Pensacola, Florida, USA

Abstract

Introduction

This study aimed to (a) examine how artificial intelligence (AI) can be integrated into doctoral coursework related to performance improvement, and (b) assess how such experiences influence students' intent to use AI in academic and professional settings. AI chatbots have become common tools for brainstorming, planning, and prototyping, and our instructional team embraced their use across undergraduate, master's, and doctoral programs in instructional design and performance improvement. As AI continues to impact our field, understanding and sharing effective integration practices is important for both faculty and students.

We employed a one-group pretest-posttest design, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data using a questionnaire grounded in the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT). Additionally, students completed weekly 200–300-word reflections over 12 weeks that included a "call to action."

Theoretical Framework

The UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003) guided the study. It includes four constructs:

- Performance expectancy: belief that using AI improves performance.
- Effort expectancy: perceived ease of using AI.
- Social influence: perception that important others expect AI use.
- Facilitating conditions: belief that organizational/technical infrastructure supports AI use.

Participants

Participants were doctoral students in a performance improvement program at a southeastern U.S. university. The course project focused on a 10-component intervention integration plan tied to each student's dissertation topic. These components included items such as an executive summary, needs assessment, project plan, professional development, and evaluation. Students were encouraged, but not required, to use ChatGPT to support idea development and refinement of components.

Methodology

A one-group pretest-posttest design guided data collection. The primary research question was: How is students' intent to use AI in academia and the workplace influenced by AI coursework experiences? Two subquestions addressed attitudes and future behavioral intent.

How are student attitudes toward using AI influenced by AI coursework experiences?

How is students' behavioral intent to use AI in the future influenced by AI coursework experiences?

Students completed a quantitative and qualitative UTAUT-based questionnaire at the beginning and end of the semester and engaged in structured weekly reflections, responding to prompts based on a learn, change, grow format.

Data Analysis & Results

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. While pretest scores for some UTAUT constructs were not normally distributed, posttest scores were. Wilcoxon signed-rank tests showed significant gains in effort expectancy ($p = .041$) and behavioral intent ($p = .016$). Multiple regression revealed that performance expectancy and facilitating conditions significantly predicted intent to use AI, explaining 58% of the variance ($R^2 = .645$, $p < .003$).

Qualitative data included weekly reflections and open-ended survey responses from 18 students, analyzed in NVivo. Preliminary coding yielded eight themes: (a) Ethical Considerations, (b) AI in the Workplace, (c) AI in Academia, (d) Challenges with AI Use, (e) AI as a Tool for Assistance, (f) Fear and Skepticism, (g) AI and Creativity, and (h) AI and Professional/Personal Growth. These themes largely align with the UTAUT framework and show how students engaged critically with AI throughout the course. Implications for instructional practice and future research will be shared with MSERA members.

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137 Leveraging the Genuis of the Community: How One School Utilized Secondary Subject-Area Teachers to Build Capacity and Community with ELA Teachers

Dr. Julie Cappo

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA, USA

Abstract

Teachers must know the subject they teach. Indeed, there may be nothing more foundational to teacher competency. The reason is simple: Teachers who do not themselves know a subject well are not likely to have the knowledge they need to help students learn this content. (Ball et al., 2008)

Teachers are exposed to many different types of knowledge. Aspiring teachers are introduced to pedagogical knowledge during their collegiate years. Once graduates secure teaching positions, and throughout their career, teachers receive professional instruction from their school and/or district. Instruction ranges from classroom management to curriculum implementation. However, far less time is spent in providing teachers with content knowledge (Ball et al., 2008), even though teachers' knowledge of the topics they teach is "crucial to good teaching and student understanding" (Cochran et al., 1991). When administrators in one Louisiana school elevated the importance of teacher content knowledge, the results surprised everyone.

Content-based ELA curriculum is utilized in schools throughout the United States. In Louisiana, one widely implemented ELA curriculum includes units based on topics such as the American Revolution, homeownership v. renting, bioethics, and artificial intelligence. These topics could be considered somewhat outside of the traditional scope of knowledge of an ELA teacher.

A Louisiana school saw the disconnect and decided to find a way to provide teachers with the needed content knowledge. Administrators looked for content-area experts. Fortunately, they did not have to look far; content experts were found teaching in their own high school.

These teachers were surprised, but eager, to share their knowledge of a subject they loved. The teachers then met with the school's instructional coach to map out professional development opportunities for the ELA teachers. The transformation had begun.

For example, high school history teachers, who were also football coaches, gained a new role on campus...they became seen as content experts. These teachers came to meetings with their partner ELA teachers loaded with pages of hand-written notes, links to YouTube videos, and reams of highly engaging factual stories rooted in the content of those ELA units. Connections were made, and community began to be built.

ELA teachers began to seek out the content experts outside of planned PLCs; content experts were invited into ELA classrooms to share their expertise; teachers who did not know one another before the project began (despite teaching on the same campus for several years) were now seen meeting to update progress, plan future lessons, and gain new learning.

Increasing teachers' content knowledge yielded "traditional" results as well. Lesson planning and pacing became more efficient and effective; teachers' questions moved far beyond knowledge level, and teachers' enjoyment and enthusiasm significantly increased.

However, this mixed-methods study yielded unforeseen results. Content-area teachers gained standing and visibility on campus. Comradery and community were built, and all participating teachers asked for the meetings to continue into the next school year. This is the story of how one school is cultivating community and building leaders from within their own faculty, and, along the way, increasing teachers' effectiveness.

RiP Roundtable

10:00 - 10:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Roundtable)
Christy Hornsby

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91 Assessing School Nurses' Knowledge of Undiagnosed Adolescent Endometriosis

Ms. Angela Durry

University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL, USA

Abstract

Introduction

"My daughter's middle school nurse felt her pain was real. Therefore, she recommended that she see a pediatric gastrointestinal physician at Johns Hopkins Children's Center." A. Durry, 2025

The adolescent female spends seven to eight hours a day in school. School nurses are one of the first health care providers that the adolescent female student will present to, demonstrating symptoms of undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis. School nurses play a vital role in identifying undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis at the early stages of

the disease, which could lead to early diagnosis and treatment. (Angelhoff & Grundström, 2023; Bodén et al., 2013; De Sanctis et al., 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Many females report that they began experiencing symptoms of endometriosis one to two years after they started menstruating but were not officially diagnosed until 5-10 years later (Bronsens et al., 2013; Endometriosis Association website, 2020; Grundström et al., 2018; Liakopoulou et al., 2022). Many recalled going to the school nurse, but they were dismissed as pain associated with their menstruation.

Many women report that they began experiencing symptoms of endometriosis one to two years after starting menstruation, but they were not officially diagnosed until 5-10 years later (Bronsens et al., 2013; Endometriosis Association website, 2020; Grundström et al., 2018; Liakopoulou et al., 2022). Many remember visiting the school nurse, but their complaints were dismissed as menstrual pain.

Adolescents often visit the school nurse complaining of pain before and during their menstrual cycles (Kilgore, 2018). Frequently, the school nurse believes that the pain is due to premenstrual or menstrual cramps caused by menstruation. As a result, the nurse may consider pain during or before menstruation to be normal, which can lead to misinformation among school nurses about menstrual pain (Angelhoff & Grundström, 2023; Liakopoulou et al., 2022).

Purpose of the Study

This quantitative study aims to examine school nurses' knowledge of undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis symptoms in the school setting, which could lead to enhancing the timely diagnosis and treatment of the phenomenon. Research reveals that the delay from symptom onset to diagnosis is due to knowledge gaps of the phenomenon among healthcare providers, patients, and their parents (Ballweg, 2017; Bodén et al., 2013; Bever, 2023; Mackenzie & Cohn, 2023; Simpson et al., 2021). Research also suggests that if endometriosis is diagnosed in its early stages, it could prevent a lifetime of pain and suffering, stop its progression before it causes damage to

organs, and decrease the rates of infertility, which demonstrates the importance of early diagnosis (Kilgore, 2018; Knox et al., 2019; Liakopoulou et al., 2022; Shim & Laufer, 2020).

This quantitative study serves a dual purpose. The first purpose is to collect information to determine the percentage of school nurses who are aware of the symptoms of undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis in the school setting and how they acquired this knowledge. The second purpose is to identify the percentage of school nurses who are unaware of these symptoms and understand their reasons. The researcher will use a modified questionnaire as the instrument to gather data for the study. Awareness among school nurses could lead to early diagnosis, treatment, and better care for adolescent females with this condition in the school environment (Angelhoff & Grundström, 2023; Bodén et al., 2013; De Sanctis et al., 2017).

Research Questions

The overarching research question guiding this inquiry is: What percentage of school nurses are and are not knowledgeable about undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis symptoms in the school setting?

This quantitative research study explores the following research questions:

1. What percentage of school nurses know about primary dysmenorrhea?

    1. Do school nurses know about the symptoms of primary dysmenorrhea?
    2. Do school nurses know about the interventions for primary dysmenorrhea?

    1. What percentage of school nurses know about secondary dysmenorrhea?
        1. Do school nurses know about the symptoms of secondary dysmenorrhea?
        2. Do school nurses know about the interventions for secondary dysmenorrhea?
    2. What percentage of school nurses know about undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis?
        1. Do school nurses know about the symptoms of undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis?
        2. Do school nurses know about interventions for undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis?
    3. What specific knowledge do school nurses have about the phenomenon?
    4. How did they come to know about the phenomenon?

5. After completing the instrument, will school nurses want to learn more about the phenomenon?

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

H_0: School nurses do not know about primary dysmenorrhea.

H_A: School nurses do know about primary dysmenorrhea.

Hypothesis 2

$H_{0:}$ School nurses do not know about secondary dysmenorrhea.

H_A: School nurses do know about secondary dysmenorrhea.

Hypothesis 3

$H_{0:}$ School nurses do not know about the symptoms of undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis.

H_A: School nurses do know about the symptoms of undiagnosed adolescent endometriosis.

Theoretical Framework

Malcolm Knowles' Adult Learning Theory

Malcolm Knowles was an American educator celebrated for his work on adult learning principles and the creation of Knowles' Adult Learning Theory in 1968 (Knowles et al., 2005). Knowles noted that effective adult learning depends on six essential elements. These are the need to know, the learner's self-concept, the role of the learner's experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and motivation (Halpern & Tucker, 2015; Knowles et al., 2005).

The drive to continuously learn as people grow is essential for school nurses and key to human development. The researcher selected Malcolm Knowles' Adult Learning Theory as the framework for this study. The researcher believes that the theory will encourage school nurses to learn about the phenomenon because they will see that the content is relevant and necessary. Knowles' Adult Learning Theory also highlights the importance of ongoing education and professional growth among school nurses.

65 Understanding the Role of Senior-Level University Leaders in Strategic Decision-Making for Athletic Programs

Ms. Kristi Davis

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA, USA

Abstract

Intercollegiate athletics play a prominent role in the identity, culture, and financial landscape of many public universities in the United States (Goff, 2000; Hesel & Perko, 2010; Hodge & Tanlu, 2009; Matheson et al., 2012). While athletics programs can generate school spirit, alumni engagement, and institutional visibility, they also present complex challenges related to financial sustainability, governance, and mission alignment (Goff, 2000; Matheson et al., 2012). University leaders tasked with overseeing athletics must make strategic decisions in the face of increasing external scrutiny, shifting enrollment trends, and resource constraints (Burton & Welty Peachey, 2013; Goff, 2000; Matheson et al., 2012; Ward & Hux, 2011). This research-in-progress examines how senior university administrators approach strategic decision-making within intercollegiate athletics, with particular attention to financial sustainability and institutional priorities. By exploring how internal values and external pressures shape leadership decisions, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the governance and sustainability of athletics in higher education.

Hill and Kikulis (1999) state that rational decision-making is restricted by individuals' limited capacity to process information and predict outcomes. Strategic decision-making involves not only recognizing and diagnosing key issues but also determining who is responsible for each phase of the process. Understanding how strategic decisions are identified and executed requires examining who initiates the decision, assessing the circumstances, and ultimately guiding the decision-making process (Hill & Kikulis, 1999). In the context of intercollegiate athletics, strategic decision-making occurs within a complex higher education system and a broader structural and regulatory environment (Cheslock & Knight, 2015), and organizational relationships can significantly impact the governance of athletics (LeCrom & Pratt, 2016). In contrast to routine administrative decisions, strategic decisions are characterized by their complexity, significant consequences, and profound impact on the organization’s direction and overall operations (Inglis, 1991).

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the Hill and Kikulis (1999) Decision-Making Process Model, which examines three critical dynamics of strategic decision-

making. These three critical dynamics include complexity, which are the intricacies relating to the particular topic being discussed; politicality, which is the impact of people on the decision-making process; and rules of the game, which is the structure of the process as directed by the type of organization. This model incorporates both internal and external resources, recognizing diverse interests, power structures, and institutional constraints that influence decision-making.

The study investigates the following questions to understand how senior-level university leaders make strategic decisions about intercollegiate athletic programs in relation to their institutions' academic, financial, and stakeholder interests:

1. How do university leaders and stakeholders consider athletics in their decision-making

   processes to align with the institutional mission?

2. How do university leaders utilize financial data to support strategic decision-making

   for intercollegiate athletics programs?

3. What are the primary expectations of different stakeholders (students, faculty, alumni,

   donors, and the community) regarding the athletics program, and how are these

   expectations communicated to university leaders?

A comprehensive search strategy was used to review the literature on the work of senior-level university leaders in shaping the strategic direction and managing athletic programs, using the following databases: Journal Storage (JSTOR), Google Scholar, and EBSCO Information Services (EBSCO). Research from peer-reviewed journals was used. This work used all relevant studies found through the literature review to offer different ideas and viewpoints.

This study employs a case study approach to examine how senior-level university leaders make strategic decisions about intercollegiate athletic programs in relation to their institutions' academic, financial, and stakeholder interests. This case study design will incorporate interviews with senior-level university leaders and diverse stakeholders, reviewing relevant documents, and observing participants in various contexts. By gathering comprehensive data, this study explores not only the rationale behind strategic decisions but also their implementation and resulting outcomes.

This case study will collect data from various sources, including qualitative interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. While interview questions will be tailored to the specific roles of the participants on campus or within the community, all participants will respond to similar questions to ensure consistency across

responses. Observations will be conducted across multiple settings, including administrative meetings, departmental or staff meetings, and campus or community events, to capture contextual details relevant to the decision-making process. Reports, correspondence, and meeting minutes will be reviewed to provide additional context for the study.

Preliminary analysis suggests that university leaders experience significant tension between maintaining the financial viability of athletics programs and ensuring alignment with institutional mission and values. Preliminary insights indicate that decision-making is heavily influenced by a combination of state-level policy expectations, donor interests, enrollment management strategies, and public perception. Participants consistently highlight the need to balance short-term financial pressures with long-term institutional goals, often navigating competing demands from internal and external stakeholders.

By incorporating insights from the Hill and Kikulis (1999) Decision-Making Process Model, this research expands the existing literature on strategic decision-making in higher education. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of utilizing financial data to inform resource allocation, helping leaders manage budget constraints, revenue generation, and cost control in athletic programs (Goff, 2000; Hesel & Perko, 2010; Hodge & Tanlu, 2009; Matheson et al., 2012). This study's findings can inform policy development, enhance theoretical understanding, and guide best practices in intercollegiate athletics and higher education leadership.

Over the next several months, I will focus on completing data collection and conducting a thorough analysis of the findings. This work will inform the policy development of Chapters 4 and 5 of my dissertation, where I will present the analyzed data and connect the findings to existing literature and theoretical frameworks. I will engage in ongoing collaboration with my dissertation committee to ensure progress towards these goals. In preparation for the MSERA Annual Meeting, I will also develop the appropriate presentation materials to communicate key insights and conclusions from this research-in-progress effectively.

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161 Constructing a Gesamtwerk-Inspired Framework for Understanding the Homeschooling Perspective: A Convergent Mixed Methods Study

Ms. Khalilah Smith

University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL, USA

Abstract

Homeschooling in its modern iteration has existed since the 1960s (Gaither, 2008) and continues to be an appealing educational choice for parents (Gloeckner & Jones, 2013). Extant homeschool research has focused on the end results of homeschooling, e.g., college readiness (Ray, 2004) as well as on commonly held myths about homeschooling, e.g., low socialization skills (Medlin, 2000). There is also a growing body of research on the inner workings of homeschooling, e.g., pedagogy (Thomas, 2016), students' attitudes toward homeschooling (McCabe et al, 2021), and parents' choices within the homeschool process (Neuman & Guterman, 2017). However, research lacks systematic frameworks connecting homeschooling processes to graduate outcomes.

This research aims to contribute nuanced understanding of identity formation within alternative educational contexts, particularly where religious and cultural identities create complex layers of experience, and its connection to the outcomes observed by parents and graduates after graduation. This work will offer insight into how educational choices interact to create unique pathways of development and understanding and how those manifest post-graduation.

Research Question

What are the dynamic connections in the homeschooling process between the parts (e.g., content and skills) and the whole (e.g., process and end goals)?

Framework

The *Gesamtwerk* (total-work) framework, as outlined by Trahndorff (1827), establishes four pillars: *Religion* (intrapersonal/worldview), *Politik* (interpersonal/social), *Kunst* (art/skill), and *Wissenschaft* (knowing-ship). Through these four pillars and their interactions, the framework simultaneously looks at the individual products and works of a person or setting as well as the collection of those products and works as a whole. The framework demonstrates how these products have their own independent value within *Gesamtwerk*, while the whole of the collection becomes significantly greater than the sum of these independent parts.

The *Gesamtwerk* framework will be operationalized through survey items measuring family decisions within each pillar (Religion, Politik, Kunst, Wissenschaft) and interview questions exploring how these domains interact throughout the homeschooling journey to create holistic educational experiences.

Methodology

This convergent parallel-database mixed methods study (Creswell, 2022) seeks to assess the process and experiences of homeschool parents and homeschool graduates through retrospective assessments of their homeschool journeys in order to construct a usable framework for understanding the pedagogical adjustments and the supporting reasons for the adjustments homeschool families frequently engage in throughout the

homeschooling process. Data is collected through (1) a prequalification survey, designed to collect needed demographic data as well as to screen potential participants to determine eligibility; (2) a novel online mixed methods survey based upon the *Gesamtwerk* framework; and (3) one-on-one semi-structured interviews with participants exploring angles of the *Gesamtwerk* framework that may manifest in the homeschool environment.

The purpose for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data is to cross-check the two datasets against each other to bring greater insight into the homeschool pedagogical choice process than would be obtained by either dataset independently.

Due to the retrospective nature of this study, homeschool parents who qualify will be required to have homeschooled in the United States for at least five years and have at least one child who completed the equivalent of twelfth grade as a homeschooler. Likewise, homeschool graduates will be required to have been homeschooled at least five years, their final year of homeschooling had to be their last year of secondary education, and they have to be at least 18 at the time of participation in the study.

A pilot study was conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the primary survey instrument through cognitive interviews (Beatty & Willis, 2007), as they allowed for the collection of survey data, but an understanding of how participants interacted with and interpreted the survey questions.

The interview guide was piloted by the researcher through a critical autoethographic study (Orbe et al., 2013) to explore her own homeschool experience and the outcomes attribute to those years. Three themes emerged (systemic/power struggle; grounding/home center; and evolution of self/identity) from six code groups.

Anticipated Outcomes & Future Implications

This study hopes to contribute to the literature: (1) construction of a comprehensive framework for evaluating holistic, non-traditional approaches to education; and (2) creation of a map of the dynamic developments of pedagogical adjustments made during the homeschool experience. The hope is that these findings could assist educators in all settings (e.g. public, private, and homeschooling) both in better adapting their practices for their students' needs as those needs change over time and in understanding the homeschooling process itself.

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57 Best Practices in Consistently *A* Rated Louisiana Middle Schools

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Abstract

1. Research Problem

The juxtaposition between teacher-centered, direct instruction models and student-centered, progressive approaches to teaching and learning as well as the current inflated emphasis on standardized test scores to categorize schools as effective creates a problem for middle school administrators and teachers. They may not understand what is needed to foster a positive learning environment specifically for middle school students. Additionally, schools may equate effectiveness solely with high test scores instead of taking a comprehensive approach that utilizes known best practices of academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and appropriate organizational structures and processes in middle level education.

2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is grounded in the belief that effective middle schools are not only academically excellent but also provide developmentally responsive education to their students with social equity supported through strong organizational structures and processes. These are the domains in which the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform's (2018) Schools to Watch (STW™) program and other professional associations identify as best practices among effective middle schools. These elements of best practice in middle level education are interconnected with developmental responsiveness at the core. This belief that schools should be student-centered and developmentally responsive is clearly rooted in the progressive belief system of John Dewey (1899) and others who contend lessons for young adolescents should be exploratory, student driven, and foster critical thinking.

This study hinges on the premise that a middle school's school performance score (SPS) based on standardized testing does not give the full picture of a school's effectiveness. Rather, a comprehensive approach to school assessment based on a school's academic performance as well as how effectively the school meets the developmental needs of its students is a more robust approach to school evaluation.

3. Research Questions

Research Question 1. What best practices are commonly reported by teachers at consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools?

Research Question 1a. Do teachers at consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools report practices defined by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform Schools to Watch (STW™) in the area of academic excellence?

Research Question 1b. Do teachers at consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools report practices defined by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform Schools to Watch (STW™) in the area of developmental responsiveness?

Research Question 1c. Do teachers at consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools report practices defined by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform Schools to Watch (STW™) in the area of social equity?

Research Question 1d. Do teachers at consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools report practices defined by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform Schools to Watch (STW™) in the area of organizational structures and processes?

Research Question 2. Are the best practices reported by teachers at consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools regularly reported among teachers at different consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools?

Research Question 3. Are there commonalities among reported best practices?

4. Methodology

This research will explore the utilization of best practices, as defined by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform Schools to Watch (STW™), in top- ranked Louisiana middle schools. This study is a mixed-methods, non-experimental, descriptive and comparative exploration of teacher-reported best practices in consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools. Quantitative data, collected through Likert-scale survey responses aligned to the four domains defined by the Schools to Watch (STWTM) self-assessment framework, will be analyzed by using descriptive statistics and the Kruskal-Wallis test to identify patterns as well as differences within and across A rated schools. Qualitative data, gathered through open-ended responses, will undergo thematic analysis to capture teachers' perspectives and supplement the quantitative findings. Together, these methods aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of commonly reported best practices in A rated middle schools.

5. Data Sources

Data will be collected via the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform Schools to Watch (STW™) self-assessment. This is a tool that allows schools to rate themselves in each domain considered essential to quality middle level education: academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures and processes. Each domain is comprised of a series of 8-10 questions answered via a 1-4 Likert scale to determine an overall rating for the domain. In addition to the Likert scale rating, for the purposes of this study, participants will also be given the option to write in additional thoughts regarding each domain and the preserved reasons for the school's success.

6. Preliminary/Anticipated Findings

This study is largely exploratory. As such, there is no defined research hypothesis. However, based on the scope of the research, one of the following hypotheses is likely to be seen at the conclusion of the study.

1. Consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools all rate highly in the domain of academic excellence but rate inconsistently in the domains of developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures and processes.

2. Consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools all rate highly in all Schools to Watch (STWTM) domains including academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures and processes.

3. There is no clear rating pattern among consistently A rated Louisiana middle schools.

7. Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will hopefully offer valuable insights that can inform the development of targeted professional development opportunities for Louisiana middle school teachers. The far-reaching impacts have the potential to assist pre-service teachers, classroom teachers, and school administrators when making informed decisions regarding educational practices. This data would also be useful to program developers at the university level and would help to offer practical examples of middle school teaching methods

8. Anticipated Next Steps

Qualitative thematic analysis will be used to categorize open-ended responses. Themes will be derived through an inductive process, with frequent reference to the STW™ framework to ensure alignment. The inductive process allows themes to emerge directly from the participants' responses. This approach ensures that the voices and lived experiences of the teachers guide the identification of recurring best practices.

141 IMPACT OF DUAL ENROLLMENT PROGRAMS IN CALCASIEU PARISH POST-COVID

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Abstract

Research Problem

Dual enrollment programs enhance college readiness and academic performance (Adkins & Garcia, 2021). While dual enrollment can motivate students and promote success through effective advising, many still receive inadequate guidance from counselors. This misalignment between students' goals and the advice they receive can lead to poor course selection, which may hinder success in dual enrollment and higher education (Spencer & Maldonado, 2021; Witkowsky et al., 2020). Underrepresented groups often lack the necessary support to benefit from these programs (Adkins & Garcia, 2021). With proper alignment of curricula and informed decision-making by counselors, dual enrollment can help bridge the educational gap for low-income families (An, 2013; Hoffman & Vargas, 2016; Friedman et al., 2020; Karp et al., 2012).

Conceptual Framework

The research aims to review the success and opportunities of dual enrollment programs in Calcasieu Parish by evaluating the effectiveness and accessibility that contribute to positive student outcomes and program effectiveness. This will shed light on key factors such as academic support, program accessibility, and student engagement. The ability to examine the support systems for high school counselors and their role in guiding students through overcoming barriers to participation, as well as offering guidance and resources, will benefit dual enrollment programs. Reviewing through a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis from program outcomes with qualitative focus group interviews from past students to gain insight into their experiences and perceptions, will allow in exploring why some high school students choose not to enroll in these programs, seeking to understand their perspectives and identifying potential obstacles is crucial.

Research question(s) and Relevant Literature

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What are the shared characteristics of positive student success from a dual enrollment program?
2. How can dual enrollment programs provide opportunities to overcome challenges with the guidance of high school counselors?

1. Why do high school students decide not to partake in a dual enrollment program?

Dual enrollment programs allow students to experience college-level coursework while still in high school, thereby bridging the gap between secondary and higher education (Baker et al., 2021; Karp et al., 2012). Students in dual enrollment programs gain early exposure to higher academic expectations and learning, while developing essential life skills that will aid their future college or career success (Karp et al., 2012; Baker et al., 2021). Dual enrollment can be especially advantageous for underserved populations, as it helps to close the gap between high school preparation and college requirements, promoting a more inclusive educational environment (Friedmann, 2020; Hoffman & Vargas, 2016; Ulloa, 2022). Topics researched include firm futures through dual enrollment programs, the positive impact of dual enrollment programs, and determinants of dual enrollment.

Methods

This research aims to enhance student participation and success in Calcasieu Parish by examining the benefits and challenges associated with these programs. Ultimately, it supports students' academic journeys. Perspectives of stakeholders, including students, high schools, and postsecondary institutions, will be invaluable. Examining the effectiveness of dual enrollment leads to smoother transitions from high school to college (Fink, 2023). Despite challenges, feedback helps researchers assess the benefits of these programs (Spight, 2020). Insights from former students illustrate the efficacy of dual enrollment. Analyzing challenges and opportunities yields insight into future practices. Assessing student perspectives is crucial for realizing the potential of dual enrollment programs. Research highlights challenges such as equity, curriculum alignment, and student readiness (Fink, 2023; Ulloa, 2020). The aim is to identify effective practices that enhance future student success. This research informs policymakers, guiding improvements in dual enrollment and facilitating successful transitions (Friedmann et al., 2020). The study emphasizes the importance of seamless transitions from high school to college (Lile et al., 2017).

Data Sources

Data collection for the focus group will utilize the meta-plan technique, as outlined by Schnelle and Stoltz (1987, 1988). This approach enables researchers to gather qualitative insights while ensuring a systematic process. The primary objective of the focus group is to explore participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the dual enrollment program and its impact on their academic success. The focus group will consist of participants who have either engaged in the dual enrollment program or opted out of participation. It will employ a semi-structured format that facilitates guided discussions while allowing participants to share their thoughts and experiences openly. This format fosters dynamic interactions and encourages a deeper exploration of specific topics relevant to the dual enrollment experience.

Preliminary Findings

Early exposure to college-level content, essential academic skills, and confidence gained from succeeding in challenging environments enhances the college readiness of dual enrollment participants. Research suggests that participants demonstrate greater college readiness due to exposure to college coursework. Dual enrollment students frequently outperform their peers in terms of academic preparedness and success in college courses (Karp et al., 2012). The rigor of dual enrollment courses enables high school students to engage with a post-secondary curriculum, enhancing critical thinking, time management, and study skills. These students transition to college with a stronger foundation and a better understanding of expectations. A key factor in the effectiveness of dual enrollment programs is the role of high school counselors in guiding students. Effective advising helps students optimize course selections and align their academic paths with career aspirations.

Anticipated Contribution to the Field

Using focus groups to investigate dual enrollment programs provides a valuable approach for gaining insights into student experiences and perceptions. This method equips educators, administrators, and policymakers with crucial information needed to improve these programs by identifying effective practices and understanding the challenges faced by students. The results will underscore the importance of equitable access to dual enrollment opportunities. As education evolves, it becomes increasingly important to understand the advantages and disadvantages of dual enrollment programs to create an inclusive and supportive environment that prepares all students for success in higher education and beyond.

Anticipated Progress

By the occurrence of the annual meeting, the researcher should be wrapping up the process of conducting focus groups, analyzing the results, generating themes, and writing the results and conclusion chapters of the dissertation.

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31 How Belonging is impacted by Texas Senate Bill 17 for Black and Latino Male Students

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Abstract

This study explores the sense of belonging experienced by Black and Latino male students at Historically White Institutions in the state of Texas following the passage of

Texas Senate Bill 17. It aims to analyze the environmental factors and challenges these students face that may affect their persistence toward graduation. The research specifically seeks to explore how the closure of Cultural Centers and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion office impacts Black and Latino male students' sense of belonging and whether hostile environmental factors affect their intent to persist. The study aims to help administrators understand the experiences of these students in this new environment and contribute to the literature on the effects of DEI closures on underrepresented students.

The literature review examines the concepts of belonging, highlighting their significance for student persistence, particularly for Black and Latino male students at PWIs. It discusses the unique challenges these students face, including hostile campus climates, racial microaggressions, and the impact of anti-DEI legislation on support systems like cultural centers. The literature review also examines Critical Race Theory as the theoretical framework for this study, specifically the tenets of the permanence of racism, counter storytelling, and intersectional convergence that will serve as the framework to analyze systemic issues.

A qualitative methodology utilizing a phenomenological study design, specifically hermeneutical phenomenology, will be employed to understand the lived experience of participants since the implementation of TX SB 17. Purposeful sampling will be used to select 10 to 15 Black and Latino male students who are sophomores, juniors, or seniors and have completed one academic year at public HWIs in the State of Texas. Data collection will involve an online demographic survey and semi-structured interviews. Data analysis will use NVivo to identify recurring themes from interview transcripts focusing on significant statements to describe the phenomenon.

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235 Instructional Leadership in Post-Human-Made Crises: A Scoping Review of Practices for Educational Recovery

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Abstract

Instructional Leadership in Post-Human-Made Crises: A Scoping Review of Practices for Educational Recovery

Statement of Purpose

This study aims to examine the role of Instructional Leadership (IL) in school settings affected by human-caused crises, with a particular focus on the post-crisis period. While instructional leaders have long been described as strong, directive figures capable of

“turning their schools around” (Hallinger, 2010), there is relatively little research describing the application of IL in post-crisis school settings. According to UNESCO (n.d.), an estimated 244 million children worldwide are currently affected by crises such as armed conflict, health and climate-related disasters, and forced displacement. Given the urgent global need for resilient educational systems in the face of ongoing instability, this scoping literature review seeks to explore how IL practices can be adapted to sustain learning and support recovery in school communities during the post-crisis phase (Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023). The guiding research question for this review is: *What does the literature reveal about the instructional leadership of administrators during post-human-made crises*

Review of Related Literature

Instructional Leadership

IL is defined by a school leader’s active engagement in promoting student achievement through a focused commitment to teaching and learning. Hallinger and Murphy (1986) emphasize that effective instructional leaders articulate a clear academic mission, set measurable goals, and align resources to support that vision. They are not distant managers but are deeply involved in the instructional core, supervising curriculum, monitoring classroom instruction, and using data to guide teaching practices (Heck et al., 1990). This data-informed decision-making enables leaders to track progress and implement timely interventions, fostering an “academic press” that encourages high expectations and accountability throughout the school. Beyond goal setting and supervision, instructional leaders cultivate collaborative professional cultures. They build structures such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) where teachers co-plan, share instructional strategies, and engage in collective problem-solving (Robinson, 2010). Leaders as “instructionally engaged,” highlighting their visible presence in classrooms and direct involvement in pedagogical conversations. Their leadership is often relational as well as strategic; through trust, charisma, and motivational influence, they unite staff toward shared goals (Ciulla, 2014). Ultimately, IL integrates academic direction with relational capacity to create the conditions necessary for sustained school improvement.

Crisis leadership

Crisis leadership in educational settings refers to a school leader's capacity to respond swiftly and effectively to sudden, disruptive events that threaten the emotional, operational, and academic stability of a school community. It involves making high-stakes decisions under pressure, navigating uncertainty, and addressing both the immediate and long-term needs of students, staff, and families. Unlike routine administrative leadership, crisis leadership requires adaptive thinking, emotional

intelligence, and the ability to coordinate collective action across stakeholders (Liou, 2009). Rooted in the broader literature that defines crises as low-probability, high-consequence events that challenge an institution's identity and survival (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992), crisis leadership in schools is uniquely relational and community-centered. It demands not only operational management but also the cultivation of trust, communication, and resilience to restore the school's mission and support post-crisis recovery.

Conceptual Framework

Instructional leadership has been conceptualized through various models over the past several decades, each reflecting different priorities and contextual demands. Early foundational frameworks, such as those proposed by Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (1990), and Van de Grift (1989), emphasized the principal's role in aligning goals, curriculum, and teaching practices. Among the most widely applied models is Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) framework, which remains central to instructional leadership research. Their model structured around three dimensions: defining the school's mission, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate, offers a clear and structured approach to understanding how school leaders drive academic achievement in relatively stable environments. Its operationalization through the Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale (PIMRS) has made it one of the most empirically supported frameworks in the field.

However, as educational environments become increasingly complex and unpredictable, particularly in post-crisis contexts, there is a need for a leadership framework that accounts for adaptive challenges, emotional dynamics, and resource limitations. For this reason, the present study adopts the instructional leadership model developed by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008), further supported by Robinson's (2010) leadership capability model. Robinson's framework identifies five core dimensions of instructional leadership, goal setting, strategic resourcing, coordinating and evaluating teaching, promoting teacher learning, and ensuring a safe, supportive environment, while also addressing *how* these practices are enacted through three critical leadership capabilities: leadership content knowledge, problem-solving skills, and relational trust. This dual focus on leadership practice and capability makes Robinson's model particularly well-suited to post-crisis recovery settings. It offers a robust and flexible lens for analyzing how leaders re-establish instructional routines, rebuild teacher capacity, and foster resilience in schools navigating the aftermath of conflict, displacement, or systemic disruption.

Methodology

This study employed a scoping review methodology to explore instructional leadership practices during post-human-made crises, following Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) five-stage framework. ***First***, the research question was refined to focus on how school administrators enact instructional leadership in post-crisis contexts. ***Second***, relevant studies were identified through comprehensive searches across Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and ERIC, supplemented by hand-searching key journals and consulting a librarian to ensure broad coverage. ***Third***, studies were selected based on predefined inclusion criteria: publications from 2009 to 2024, written in English, Turkish, or Russian, and addressing instructional leadership in human-made crisis settings. ***Fourth***, data were charted using an Excel matrix to extract details such as publication data, context, methodology, and findings; the findings sections of each article were manually coded using a deductive framework informed by Hallinger and Murphy's instructional leadership model. ***Finally***, the fifth stage involved collating, summarizing, and reporting the results to identify leadership strategies, patterns, and gaps relevant to post-crisis instructional leadership.

Findings

In the post-crisis period, school principals implemented a range of instructional leadership strategies to reestablish stability and support student learning. A primary approach involved adapting teaching practices to address students' emotional and intellectual recovery needs. This included the integration of social-emotional learning (SEL) and a focused emphasis on essential curriculum areas, helping students re-engage with learning while reducing cognitive overload. Curriculum modifications—such as streamlining content and prioritizing core subjects, were critical in maintaining educational continuity amid limited time and resources.

Additionally, schools embedded trauma-informed supports into instructional routines, including bereavement counseling and emotional care programs, which stabilized students' emotional well-being and indirectly reinforced academic engagement. Post-crisis professional development played a vital role in equipping teachers with the tools to adjust their instructional approaches, provide emotional support, and sustain teaching quality in the aftermath of disruption. Finally, principals promoted flexible and creative teaching strategies, such as hybrid learning models, play-based learning, and safety-focused instruction, allowing schools to adapt to new realities while keeping students motivated and connected to the learning process.

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147 Preservice Teachers' Comparison of Fractions using Representations of Area, Linear, and Set Contexts

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Abstract

Research Problem

In 2022, the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), which assesses mathematics at 4th, 8th, and 12th grade levels, was administered for the first time since the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic. Since the initial assessment in 1990, scores had increased steadily until 2022, when 4th grade math results had significant decreases (NCES, 2022). Meanwhile, a 2014 meta-analysis revealed that pre-service teachers (PSTs) were able to multiply, divide, and compare fractions, but they were unable to explain why the algorithms worked, struggling with understanding how procedures translate to different contexts and with demonstrating an ability to routinely move between different representations of the same function (Thanheiser et al., 2014). Representation is a vital component of problem solving and conceptual understanding; the effectiveness of the representation is dependent on its use by teachers and their students (Duval, 2006). Lee and Lee (2019) found that educators need to help PSTs effectively use pedagogical representations as opposed to solution representations. The decrease in mathematical proficiency among elementary students demonstrates the need for more research in preparing elementary PSTs to teach math effectively, particularly content related to fractions (Lamon, 2007).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is based on Shulman's (1986) research explaining the knowledge math teachers must have to be successful. Shuman's framework consists of Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK), Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK), and Curricular Knowledge. Ball et al. (2008) expanded upon Shulman's framework by establishing subcategories within SMK and PCK to better classify required knowledge for teachers and PSTs. Subject Matter Knowledge is comprised of Common Content Knowledge (CCK), Specialized Content Knowledge (SCK), and Horizon Content Knowledge (Ball et al., 2008). Subcategories of PCK include Knowledge of Content and Students (KCS), Knowledge of Content and Teaching (KTS), and Knowledge of Content and Curriculum (KCC). The inter-related

categories make up the pedagogical knowledge that teachers must have to help their students learn content. Understanding what PSTs must know to be successful to teach mathematics is paramount to best prepare them.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are to investigate PSTs' ability to compare fractions conceptually, to examine PSTs' ability to select appropriate representations for given fractions in context, to investigate PSTs' ability to create accurate representations for comparing fractions, and to determine the extent to which PSTs' ability to compare fractions is correlated with their ability to create accurate representations.

Research Questions

This study will attempt to answer four research questions:

1. Do PSTs accurately compare fraction values, and does their accuracy improve following instruction with manipulative representation?
2. Do PSTs select appropriate representations for a given context, and does their accuracy improve following instruction with manipulative representation?
3. Do PSTs accurately represent fraction comparisons using appropriate representations, and does their accuracy improve following instruction on manipulative representation?
4. Is there a statistically significant correlation between PSTs' selection of an appropriate representation and the correctness of their representation?

Methods

Within this quasi-experimental study, the treatment and control groups will each have approximately 50 participants. The control group will receive the typical conceptually based instruction provided in a mathematics methods course regarding fraction concepts. The treatment group will receive conceptually based instruction that is more focused on fraction comparisons and will engage them in different activities than the control group. A Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) will be used to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between the treatment and control groups for the first three research questions. To address the fourth research question, the researcher will compute participants' mean posttest scores, variance, and standard deviation for representation appropriateness and correctness. The appropriate correlation method will be employed based on distribution.

Instrumentation

Data will be collected at the start and end of three consecutive semesters of a required senior-level elementary mathematics methods course using 15 open-ended fraction comparison items requiring representations. To assess reliability, Cronbach's alpha will be determined. Each item score will be correlated with the total assessment score and

compared to overall score variance (Ohiri & Nnennaya, 2024). To evaluate content and construct validity, questions were aligned to one of three expected models. The researcher avoided poor wording, flawed item construction, ambiguity, and unclear instructions, which can undermine validity (Ohiri & Nnennaya, 2024). Content experts reviewed the instrument to confirm that questions measure the intended constructs.

Anticipated findings

Based on preliminary analysis of the first round of data collected, the researcher expects that the participants in the control group will primarily use area models on both the pretest and posttest while the treatment group will draw more models that match the context within respective posttest items. The researcher expects that the treatment group will draw more appropriate models based on the instruction they receive as the intervention.

Scholarly significance or anticipated contribution to the field

This study will extend the research conducted with PSTs regarding knowledge of fraction representations used when comparing fractions. This is significant because research studies on fraction representations from PSTs have primarily analyzed representations of fraction operations rather than fundamental fraction concepts like comparison and magnitude (Mohamed et al., 2021). A common research-based conclusion is that elementary students and PSTs struggle with unitizing, a skill that is often necessary when comparing and creating fraction models. This study will address PSTs' abilities to compare fraction values using representations when given real world contexts. While prior research has shown the impact of real-world contexts, most of this research was focused on fraction operations. Lastly, this study will have implications for mathematics methods pedagogy, as it may reveal effective strategies for teaching fraction comparison and methods of representation to PSTs.

Anticipated progress prior to the Annual Meeting of MSERA

At the start of the fall semester of 2025, the researcher will administer the pretest to the treatment group of participants as well as begin the fraction unit focusing on fraction comparison with appropriate models based on their contexts. The posttest for this group of participants will not be completed before the Annual Meeting.

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213 LEADERSHIP IN MIDDLE LEVEL STEM EDUCATION

Ms. Alice Medidi

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Abstract

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an in-depth exploration of the critical role an organizational leadership plays in advancing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education within middle schools. As the global landscape becomes increasingly reliant on STEM competencies for economic growth, innovation, and societal advancement, the responsibilities of school leaders have expanded beyond traditional administrative functions (Tavdgiridze et al., 2024). According to Sanderson (2023), today's principals, assistant principals, and teacher-leaders are called to serve as visionaries, catalysts, and facilitators, shaping the direction, quality, and sustainability of STEM initiatives that prepare students for the demands of the 21st century.

The analysis is grounded in a synthesis of contemporary organizational theories namely, systems theory, project-based learning (PBL), and distributed cognition leadership structures (DCLS), and best practices from the field. The paper begins by contextualizing the urgent need for robust STEM education in middle schools, highlighting challenges such as integrating multidisciplinary content, ensuring equity and inclusion, and fostering student engagement in an era of rapid technological change.

A central argument of the paper is that effective leadership is essential for embedding STEM into the fabric of school culture. Mogaji and Dimingu (2024) suggested that leaders are shown to be instrumental in articulating a clear vision for STEM, aligning resources, and creating a climate that encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and collaboration. The paper discusses how school leaders can set high expectations for both staff and students, promote a growth mindset, and ensure that STEM learning is relevant and connected to real-world contexts.

Project-based learning (PBL) is examined as a foundational pedagogical approach for STEM education. Rooted in the progressive educational philosophies of John Dewey and formalized by William Heard Kilpatrick in the early 20th century, PBL emphasizes student-centered, inquiry-driven learning through engagement with authentic, real-world problems. The paper details how PBL fosters critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication skills that are essential for success in STEM careers and contemporary workplaces. According to Bridges & Hallinger (1995), leaders play a pivotal role in supporting PBL by providing professional development, facilitating collaborative planning among teachers, and celebrating student achievements. The paper notes the importance of integrating technology and digital tools to enhance student engagement and build digital literacy.

Systems theory, developed by Lugwig von Bertalanffy, is presented as a valuable lens for understanding the interconnectedness of school components. Tsarkos (2024)

suggested that by viewing the school as a dynamic, adaptive ecosystem, leaders can analyze relationships among students, teachers, curriculum, families, and the broader community. This holistic perspective enables leaders to identify leverage points for meaningful change, anticipate the ripple effects of decisions, and address complex challenges such as resource allocation, and equity in access to STEM opportunities. The paper provides examples of how systems thinking can inform data-driven decision-making, collaborative problem-solving, and improvement in STEM education.

The concept of distributed cognition and leadership, articulated by Edwin Hutchins, is explored to democratize leadership and decision-making within schools, and posits that knowledge and problem-solving are not confined to individuals but are constructed through interactions among people, tools, and environments (Fowlin et al., 2025). Distributed leadership extends to this idea by sharing leadership roles among administrators, teachers, students, families, and community partners. The paper argues that distributed leadership enhances collective intelligence, fosters innovation, and builds resilience where collaboration and diverse perspectives drive success. Empirical evidence is cited to show that schools with distributed leadership models have higher levels of teacher motivation, organizational commitment and student achievement.

The paper addresses the importance of culturally responsive leadership in promoting equity and inclusion in STEM education. Buckner & Boyd (2015) suggested that leaders are encouraged to recognize and value the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and strengths of students, and to connect STEM curricula to students' cultures and communities. Strategies for dismantling systematic barriers, closing achievement gaps, and supporting underrepresented groups in STEM are discussed. The role of mentorship, outreach programs, and partnerships with industry and community organizations is emphasized to provide authentic STEM experiences and diverse role models for students.

A significant portion of the paper is devoted to practical strategies for developing and sustaining effective STEM leadership in middle schools which include targeted professional development for teachers and leaders, the establishment of professional learning communities, the use of data to inform instructional improvement, and the cultivation of teacher-leaders who can drive innovation from within (Sublette, 2013). The paper highlights the importance of flexible organizational structures, creative scheduling, and resource allocation to support interdisciplinary STEM learning and extracurricular opportunities. Empirical studies reviewed in the paper confirm that effective leadership is a critical lever for enhancing student achievement, engagement, and retention in STEM subjects.

According to Hitt and Tucker (2016), schools with strong instructional leadership, collaborative cultures, and a focus on equity are shown to be particularly successful in supporting underrepresented students and closing achievement gaps. The paper provides a model for enhancing these elements and discusses the challenges faced by STEM leaders, including resource constraints, resistance to change, and the complexities of integrating new pedagogical approaches.

The paper concludes by asserting that the future of STEM education in middle schools depends on leadership that is visionary collaborative, and equity driven. By integrating organizational theories and best practices, school leaders can create environments where STEM education thrives, equipping all students with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed for lifelong success in a rapidly changing world. The study calls for ongoing research into the interplay of leadership models and their impact on diverse student populations, emphasizing the need for context sensitive, sustainable approaches to STEM leadership.

In summary, this paper makes a compelling case for the centrality of organizational leadership in the transformation of STEM education. It provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how visionary, system-oriented, and distributed leadership can drive innovation, promote equity, and build resilient, future-ready learning communities. The insights and recommendations offered are intended to guide policymakers, educators, and researchers in their efforts to advance STEM education and prepare for the next generation of leaders, innovators, and problem-solvers.

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128 Motivation Matters: The Incentive to Educate

Ms. Lauren Kyle, Dr. Amy Benton

Samford University, Homewood, AL, USA

Abstract

Education serves as the foundation for all other fields of study and professions, making it one of the most instrumental and impactful areas of human development. At the heart of this field are educators, who play a pivotal role in shaping the educational journeys of students and ensuring their success. Educators are among the most influential individuals in society due to their ability to inspire, guide, and positively impact the lives of their students. However, education is not a "one size fits all" profession. It requires passionate individuals who can connect with students and adapt to their diverse needs. Within this dynamic field, opportunities are abundant, and the outcomes often depend on how educators and stakeholders utilize these opportunities.

One critical aspect of education is the recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers. Over the years, teacher incentives have emerged as a vital component in addressing these challenges. These incentives, which can be categorized as intrinsic or extrinsic, play a significant role in motivating educators to join and remain in the profession. Intrinsic incentives, such as professional development opportunities, job satisfaction,

effective leadership, and public service motivation, foster personal fulfillment and confidence in the profession. Extrinsic incentives, on the other hand, include strategic compensation mechanisms such as merit pay, bonuses, contracts, and allowances. Both types of incentives are essential, as they address different aspects of teacher motivation and satisfaction.

This research study explores the role of teacher incentives in the recruitment and retention of educators, with a particular focus on the evolution of these incentives over the past 40 years. By analyzing peer-reviewed journal articles, educational reform initiatives, and legislative documents, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of various teacher incentives. Key educational reforms and legislation, such as *A Nation at Risk*, *A Nation Accountable*, *No Child Left Behind*, *Race to the Top*, *Teach for America*, and the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, are examined to trace the historical development of teacher incentives in the United States. These reforms have shaped the landscape of education and influenced the design and implementation of teacher incentives. One notable example of a recent teacher incentive is the Teacher Excellence and Accountability for Mathematics and Science (TEAMS) program. Developed within the last five years, this program aims to address the shortage of mathematics and science teachers by offering additional compensation ranging from $5,000 to $20,000 per year under a signed contract. In exchange, participating teachers are required to fulfill additional professional development requirements and work extra days. The TEAMS program exemplifies how targeted incentives can be used to address specific content area shortages and improve teacher recruitment and retention.

The study also highlights the importance of understanding the motivations behind educators' decisions to enter and remain in the teaching profession. While some reasons for these decisions have remained consistent over time, others have evolved due to external factors and societal challenges. By collecting and analyzing data from current teachers and preservice teachers, this research seeks to identify the most impactful incentives and provide insights into how they can be improved. The findings aim to equip administrators, board members, superintendents, community leaders, and other stakeholders with the knowledge needed to develop effective strategies for recruiting and retaining educators.

Educational incentives, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, are crucial for maintaining a high-quality teaching workforce. However, the study emphasizes the need for equitable and accessible incentives for all teachers, regardless of their content area or specialization. Collective incentives that benefit all educators could address the frustration and disparities often associated with targeted incentives. By focusing on incentivizing all teachers within the public sector, the education system could achieve more accurate recruitment and retention outcomes, ultimately leading to improved teaching and learning experiences for all stakeholders. The study also underscores the importance of evidence-based decision-making and continuous research in the field of teacher incentives. Over time, many incentives have been introduced, with varying degrees of success. Some have failed due to their design or implementation, while others have

proven effective in addressing specific challenges. By analyzing the successes and shortcomings of past incentives, this research aims to inform the development of future policies and practices that support educators and enhance the overall quality of education.

Teacher incentives are a vital component of educational reform and play a critical role in addressing the challenges of recruitment and retention. By examining the history of educational incentives, analyzing their impact, and identifying areas for improvement, this research aims to contribute to the ongoing efforts to support educators and enhance the quality of education. Future research should focus on developing equitable and collective incentives that benefit all teachers, fostering a more inclusive and effective education system. Through continued analysis and evidence-based decision-making, stakeholders can create policies and practices that empower educators and ensure the success of students and the broader educational community.

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154 Culture Shock and the International Student

Ms. Eugenia Jones, Dr. Christy Hornsby

Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, La, USA

Abstract

The number of international students in the United States (US) is increasing each year. This is in part because educational opportunities are higher in standard than in their home country. Over half a million international students were enrolled in higher education in the US year 2020-21 (Stewart-Rozema & Pratts, 2023). Students enter the country to ultimately get their degrees and, in many cases, obtain career experience. Although culture shock helps international students achieve culture tolerance, it contributes to significant negative effects, especially alienation, feelings of homesickness and poor academic performance (Mulyadi et al., 2024).

The research question guiding this study is, what are the effects, if any, of culture shock to international students while studying in the United States at a university in northeast Louisiana? For this study, culture shock will be defined as the anxiety felt by the international students when they relocate from their domestic countries to international countries with unfamiliar cultures.

The process of cultural adjustment is not immediate; rather, it occurs in distinct stages that impact students' academic performance, social interactions, and overall well-being (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Understanding these stages can help institutions and educators provide targeted support to international students as they navigate the challenges of adaptation. The four recognized stages of culture shock—honeymoon, shock, adjustment, and adaptation—illustrate the progression of emotions and experiences that students undergo in their new environment (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963).

Culture shock is a common phenomenon among international students which contributes to significant negative effects. It contributes to poor academic performance, feelings of homesickness and alienation (Learning, 2023). School officials should use the different stages of culture shock to help students adapt to their new environment. However, culture shock is normal, largely uncontrollable, and is therefore not an indication that someone has got it wrong. There are some benefits to culture shock. The encounter can be a substantial learning opportunity, increasing one's awareness of elements of their very own heritage as well as the foreign experience into which they have joined. It would provide individuals with beneficial skills that will help them in a range of methods now and for the long term, which is one of the advantages of international education.

Engaging with different cultures and experiencing culture shock can be instrumental in fostering global awareness and reducing ethnocentrism. Exposure to new cultural norms and values challenges implicit biases and encourages individuals to embrace diversity, ultimately promoting cross-cultural understanding and reducing prejudice (Hofstede, 2010). While culture shock can be a difficult adjustment, it also provides an opportunity for individuals to develop essential life skills such as resilience, flexibility, and problem-solving (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009).

Research Design

This study will employ a mixed methods design. A questionnaire will be used to gather numerical data and focus groups will be used to gather more insightful information. Focus groups will be used as the primary method of data collection, with structured questionnaires administered to participants before and after discussions. The rationale for using this design is to quantify cultural adaptation patterns while allowing for group discussions to enhance data validity through shared experiences.

A cross-sectional research design will be applied to capture students' experiences at a specific point in time. This allows for a broader understanding of how students at different stages of their academic journey experience culture shock. This study aims to establish patterns and trends in adaptation, rather than tracking individual progress over an extended period.

The target population will consist of international students enrolled at a mid-sized university in northeast Louisiana, 18 years of age or older. Participants will be selected

through purposive sampling, ensuring diverse representation from various cultural backgrounds, academic levels, and lengths of stay in the country. The inclusion criteria require that participants be full-time international students who have been enrolled for at least one semester. This criterion ensures that participants have had adequate exposure to the cultural environment and can provide meaningful insights into their experiences.

*I am currently writing my proposal (first 3 chapters) and hope to have successfully written and passed my oral defense by the time of the MSERA conference.

Symposium - Working Backward to Move Forward: Cultivating a Community of Lifelong Researchers in a Remodeled M.Ed. Program

10:00 - 10:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Lisette Manuel

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73 Working Backward to Move Forward: Cultivating a Community of Lifelong Researchers in a Remodeled M.Ed. Program

Dr. Margaret Westmoreland, Dr. Thomas DeVaney, Dr. Lisette Manuel

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA, USA

Abstract

This symposium proposes a panel discussion detailing the comprehensive overhaul of the Master's of Education (M.Ed.) Program at Southeastern Louisiana University, a process spanning over two years and currently in its implementation and data collection phases.

This initiative directly addresses the MSERA conference theme, "Cultivating a Community of Lifelong Researchers," by demonstrating how a structured, research-informed program redesign can foster a mindset of ongoing investigation among both faculty and future educational leaders.

This symposium will consist of the following segments:

- Change Motivators: The catalyst for this extensive undertaking began in 2022 with two critical shifts: the transition from ELCC to the new NELP Standards and the change from 16-week to 8-week course formats for all master level courses in Educational Leadership. These changes necessitated a complete reimagining of our curriculum.
- Working Backward: The academic model anchoring this redesign was Backward Design, an instructional framework introduced by Wiggins and McTighe (1998). Backward Design encourages instructors to establish clear student learning outcomes before developing content and assessments (Lungu, 2024). This model compelled us to align our program goals, course objectives, assessments, and learning activities cohesively.
- Doing the Work:
    - Beginning in Fall 2023, our department meticulously broke down NELP Standards into sub-standards, assigning each to a specific course and using Backward Design to create corresponding Major Artifacts.
    - By Fall 2024, significant strides were made, including the development of comprehensive rubrics for all ten courses' Major Artifacts, detailed module topics, and initial course shells.
    - In Spring 2025, we worked to finalize master shells with content for all instructors, including potential adjunct instructors who will use these master shells.
    - As of Summer 2025, most new courses are being piloted, and we are actively collecting data on module alignment and difficulty, as well as detailed outcomes for each Major Artifact rubric component.
- What’s Next: Moving forward, our immediate task is to continue this intensive data collection and analysis throughout the pilot phase. The insights gained will inform iterative refinements to course content, assessments, and pedagogical approaches, ensuring optimal student learning and program effectiveness. We also plan to identify specific field experiences we want for our students and submit our courses to the University’s Course Alignment Process for approval.
- Conclusion: This ongoing cycle of design, implementation, assessment, and refinement exemplifies the very spirit of lifelong research we aim to cultivate.

Training - Build, Bond, Beyond: Cultivating a Thriving Classroom Community

10:00 - 10:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Presentation type Training
Raglena Salmans

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5 Build, Bond, Beyond: Cultivating a Thriving Classroom Community

Dr. Raglena Salmans[1], Dr. Stefanie Sorbet[2]

[1]Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, Kentucky, USA. [2]University of Central Arkansas, Conway, Arkansas, USA

Abstract

Across all classrooms on college campuses, students need to feel welcomed, included and engaged in their learning communities. Faculty should foster that community and connection with their students from the very first day of classes. Students should feel included and welcomed in their classroom. By engaging in social and emotional learning, students can gain social awareness which increases their empathy and causes students to come to understand that the people they encounter all come from diverse backgrounds (Sorbet & Notar, 2022). To best prepare our college students for their professional careers, professors and instructors should foster social and emotional learning in their learning spaces. Social and emotional learning is linked to the success of students, teachers, and school environments (Usakli & Ekici, 2018). In this presentation, four core methods for building community within the classroom will be discussed: a. A Welcoming Atmosphere b. Cooperation and Connection c. Recognition and Reinforcement d. Beyond the Classroom. The strategies and discussions for building community will apply to every classroom on college campuses and beyond. Implementation for building community can go well beyond P-20 educators and into civic settings. Planting the seed of connection today to cultivate community tomorrow. By implementing community building in every classroom, every session, students come to recognize one another, lean on one another, and look out for one another, just as in a traditional community setting. This session will focus on in-person, online, hybrid, and distributed settings. On all college campuses, students need to feel welcome and included so they may become engaged in their learning. Trainees will engage in community-building activities that can be taken with them to begin implementing in their classrooms immediately.

RiP Lecture - Leadership and Improvement

11:00 - 11:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Lecture)
Ibrahim Duyar

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96 Reducing Chronic Absenteeism: Applying Improvement Science in an Elementary School Context (Root Cause Analysis)

Ms. Ashley Staggs

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, USA

Abstract

The overarching research problem of my study is to reduce the number of chronically absent students at a rural elementary school in Kentucky. This mixed-methods study follows an improvement science framework guided by the principles of adaptive leadership. As of June 2025, the root cause analysis (RCA) phase has been completed, and the quantitative and qualitative results have been analyzed and synthesized. Professionally, I am a school counselor with a background in special education pursuing a doctorate in educational leadership at Western Kentucky University.

Using an improvement science dissertation-in-practice (DiP) model, the literature review for my program is embedded throughout the entire project. For chapter one, an overarching literature review discussed the problem of chronic absenteeism at large. In chapter two, the literature review focused strictly on possible root causes of chronic absenteeism. Subsequent chapters will include literature reviews about possible interventions. Data sources thus far included peer-reviewed articles, reports, and textbooks primarily from the United States in the last twenty years.

The research questions for the RCA included the following: What demographics of students experience the highest levels of chronic absenteeism? What do school staff believe are the root causes of chronic absenteeism? What are the main barriers to attendance from the parents' perspectives?

I received Institutional Review Board approval for the RCA phase of my study.

To analyze which demographics of students experience the highest levels of chronic absenteeism, I analyzed existing student data from the statewide student information system and conducted chi-square goodness-of-fit and chi-square tests of independence to find any demographic groups that displayed disproportionate levels of chronic absenteeism from the past two school years.

To discover staff beliefs surrounding chronic absenteeism, I administered a voluntary survey to all school staff, which included both Likert-scale questions and extended response sections. Then I used descriptive statistics to analyze quantitative items. To uncover barriers to attendance according to the parents, I conducted three interviews with parents of students who had been chronically absent in the past two school years. For both analyses, I used a priori coding and inductive coding. Before my final synthesis, I conducted a thematic analysis of both types of qualitative data to uncover trends between staff and parent responses. The data aligned with the same overarching categories (i.e., parent needs/issues, student needs/issues, and health issues), but the proportion of categories differed between the two sources.

In synthesizing both the qualitative and quantitative results of the RCA, I found discrepancies between staff perceptions and parent understanding of the school's attendance policy. While survey data indicate that most staff believe parents are adequately educated on the attendance policy, interview responses displayed confusion. This gap highlights a potential misalignment in parent communication and comprehension, which also aligns with the research about the importance of explicit parent education on good attendance. Additionally, socioeconomic issues emerged across all data sources, with economically disadvantaged students being significantly overrepresented among the chronically absent. Data sources aligned with existing research linking poverty to absenteeism, but the qualitative data offered more nuanced insights from the parent interviews about the barriers families face. This data converged with the literature.

Analysis of the student absenteeism rate by demographics revealed patterns that both align with and diverge from the literature. Special education students and kindergarteners showed persistent disproportionality in chronic absenteeism (in one or both studied years), which aligns with current research. Surprisingly, White students were also disproportionately affected, which contrasts with most research pointing to minority students. This discrepancy could be tied to the high rate of economically disadvantaged students in this school (over 80%). ELL and African American students, who are typically considered at higher risk nationally based on the literature review, did not show disproportionality in this school. Furthermore, while female students were overrepresented in one year, the concurrent sequential design of the study prevented further analysis to determine the root cause. Behavior resolution data showed that chronically absent students were not more likely to face disciplinary actions, which contradicts some national trends suggesting that chronically absent students are more likely to face disciplinary action.

Regarding conclusions and recommendations for interventions, I considered which groups would be most suitable for an intervention following a Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycle. I ruled out economically disadvantaged students, White students, and females since each group represents over 50% of the population, which would be large for a targeted intervention. I am considering focusing on either kindergarten students or special education students for my first intervention cycle, as either group would comprise about 20% of the population. I am currently exploring interventions. My

preliminary intervention recommendations focused on targeting parents since they are the primary drivers of elementary student attendance.

This root cause analysis provides valuable insights, although the context is limited to one school. By presenting my findings at this stage, the nuanced data could provide a springboard for other researchers hoping to deeply analyze the root cause of chronic absenteeism in their organization. The findings and process outlined in this study may inform both researchers and practitioners seeking to address chronic absenteeism through localized, data-informed strategies grounded in improvement science, especially in diverse, rural, low-income schools.

The next steps for this improvement science dissertation-in-practice (DiP) are to design the first intervention, apply for Institutional Review Board approval, and deploy my first intervention by August or September of 2025. Although I am still in the process of designing my first intervention, I am strongly considering conducting parent workshops about attendance and other topics for kindergarten students, as they have the most urgent need for early intervention at the start of the year. The DiP will also include a second PDSA intervention cycle, which should take place in the spring of 2026. Depending on the results of the first intervention, I might find a way to incorporate the special education population for the second intervention cycle to attempt to improve outcomes for those students as well.

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183 Influence of Principals' Ethical Leadership Practices on Teachers' Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: A Closer Look at the Moderating Role of Teachers' Trust in their Principals

Ms. Turan Ahmedova[1], Dr. Ibrahim Duyar[2]

[1]University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida, USA. [2]Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, Jonesboro, USA

Abstract

Problem Statement

The establishment of a school culture based on trust is a key to enhancing the quality of instruction and performance of teachers (Balyer, 2017). However, according to studies, there tends to be a lack of trust in principals and participation in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), which restricts the capacity of schools to develop supportive environments (Çoban et al., 2023; Yang & Wei, 2018). The lack of or the insufficiency of ethical leadership (EL) practice could be one of the factors contributing to this problem. Fairness, care, and transparency as actionable attributes of ethical

leadership can have a positive effect on trust and teacher behavior (Brown & Treviño, 2006), but it is not regularly distributed uniformly on school grounds. Although there exists an increasing body of research in other countries deriving the correlation between EL and OCB, there is, on the other hand, very little research on such aspects within the U.S, particularly into the moderating influences of trust. This paper fills that gap by researching the moderating role of trust in school leaders with the ethics leadership and organizational citizenship behavior in teachers.

Theoretical Framework

A conceptual model drives this study, where teachers' trust in school leaders moderates the connection between the ethical leadership practices of principals and the organizational citizenship behavior of teachers (OCB). It is assumed that ethical leadership may affect OCB positively, and the intensity of this effect should be greater with high trust and lower with low trust.

The study is based on the Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which suggests that well-established interpersonal relations within an organizational setting may produce both prosocial behaviors. Effective leaders can create a trusting environment through transparency, fairness, and moral leadership, which can either enhance or reduce the impact of leadership practices on teacher behavior. Further, Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986) provides a perspective that may be used to explain the effect of demonstrated ethical behaviors by the school leadership on the discretionary efforts of the teachers, such as OCB. The trust in leadership is used as the moderating variable with which the relationship between ethical leadership and OCB becomes powerful.

Research Questions

The current study will attempt to address the following research questions:

1. Do principals’ ethical leadership practices and teachers’ trust in their principals influence teachers’ organizational citizenship behaviors?
2. Do teachers’ trust moderate the relationship between principals’ ethical leadership and teachers’ organizational citizenship behaviors?

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

This is a quantitative study using a cross-sectional survey design. The researcher will distribute an online questionnaire to public school teachers in Pinellas, Pasco, and Hillsborough counties. The instrument includes three validated scales: *Ethical Leadership Scale* (Mitropolou et al., 2019); Trust in Leaders Scale (Adams & Sartori, 2006); and Organizational Citizenship Behavior Checklist (Spector et al., 2010).

The questionnaire also includes demographic items and several open-ended questions to allow for deeper insights into teachers' experiences.

Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

Data will be collected via Qualtrics and will include teacher responses from schools in the three counties. Participants will be recruited via district-approved channels. The survey ensures anonymity and voluntary participation, with no compensation provided.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Based on prior studies (Poohongthong et al., 2014; Riza Pertiwi et al., 2019), it is anticipated that teachers who perceive their principals as ethical will report higher levels of OCB. Additionally, it is expected that the strength of this relationship will vary depending on the level of trust teachers have in their principals. That is, trust may moderate the influence of ethical leadership on OCB, such that the relationship is stronger when trust is high and weaker when trust is low.

Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution to the Field

This study offers empirical evidence from U.S. public schools to a largely international body of research on ethical leadership and OCB. It has implications for leadership preparation and policy, particularly in how ethical leadership training may enhance school climate and teacher engagement. The results may guide school districts in supporting ethical leadership as a strategy for improving school culture and teacher satisfaction, with attention to how trust can strengthen or weaken leadership effectiveness.

Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Prior to the Annual Meeting

Institutional IRB approval is currently in progress. District-level applications for research access are underway in Pinellas, Pasco, and Hillsborough counties. The researcher anticipates launching the survey in late September or early October 2025, depending on approval timelines. Data collection will be completed by late October, with preliminary analysis prepared in time for presentation at the MSERA Annual Meeting in November.

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106 Navigating Organizational Change: Leadership Team Perspectives in Advising Transitions

Ms. Kathleen Vercher

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, Louisiana, USA

Abstract

Community colleges often face challenges when implementing large-scale institutional change, especially when the change affects multiple departments and requires collaboration across varied functional areas. Academic advising is one such area, where inconsistency, lack of ownership, and repeated restructuring have led to ongoing instability. Transitions from decentralized to centralized advising structures are particularly difficult due to differences in departmental priorities, limited resources, and resistance to change. Leadership plays a central role in how these transitions unfold, yet little is known about how leadership teams experience and respond to these shifts in real time.

This research-in-progress explores how leadership teams experience organizational change during a transition from decentralized to centralized advising in a mid-sized community college. The study focuses on understanding the lived experiences of institutional leaders, faculty, and staff as they navigate this transition, with an emphasis on leadership styles, communication strategies, and decision-making processes that influence both implementation and outcomes.

The study is grounded in three interconnected conceptual frameworks. First, Bolman and Deal's Four Frames (Structural, Human Resources, Political, and Symbolic) provide a multidimensional lens for understanding how leaders interpret challenges, manage resistance, and shape organizational narratives during change. Second, leadership theory offers insight into how different styles influence engagement, decision-making, and collaboration. Third, the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders provide a practical foundation for examining how institutional priorities such as communication, cultural awareness, student success, and transformation guide leadership practice during advising reform.

Four research questions guide this study:

1. How do members of a community college leadership team experience the transition from a decentralized to a centralized advising model, particularly in relation to their leadership styles and practices?
2. How do key stakeholders experience organizational change when transitioning to a centralized advising model?
3. How do community college leaders address challenges and resistance during the transition to a centralized advising model?
4. How do leadership practices during the transition align with institutional goals such as equity, student success, and efficiency?

This study builds on an existing body of literature that addresses community college leadership, institutional culture, and the impact of advising models on student outcomes. Previous research highlights the role of culturally responsive leadership in securing stakeholder buy-in (Kezar & Eckel, 2002), the importance of systems thinking in navigating institutional complexity (Davis et al., 2015), and the value of data-informed, equity-minded leadership (Burmicky & Duran, 2022). Studies on advising structures demonstrate that consistent, proactive support improves student persistence and retention (Chiteng Kot, 2014; Bettinger & Baker, 2014; McKinney et al., 2024).

Using an intrinsic case study design, this research employs mixed methods to investigate the advising transition at a single institution. As a participant researcher, I engage in direct observation, conduct semi-structured interviews and focus groups, analyze institutional documents, and administer surveys. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (SoCQ), part of the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), is used to measure stakeholder attitudes and concerns throughout the implementation process.

Primary data sources include internal communications, meeting minutes, and planning documents related to the advising transition; pre-, mid-, and post-implementation survey results from the SoCQ; transcribed interviews and focus groups with leaders, faculty, and advising staff; and observational notes from planning sessions and committee meetings.

Anticipated findings may include patterns of stakeholder resistance tied to differences in departmental culture and inconsistent communication. Leadership styles are expected to influence how individuals experience and respond to the change. Preliminary data may show that silos and competing priorities across departments make collaboration difficult, pointing to the need for more transparent communication and more coordinated leadership. The CBAM results are also expected to reflect a range of concerns, offering insight into how stakeholders are processing the transition at different stages.

This study contributes to the literature by offering a real-time look at how leadership experiences organizational change in the context of academic advising transitions. It extends Bolman and Deal's Four Frames by applying them directly to advising reform, and it provides practical application of AACC Competencies within a case-specific leadership setting. By focusing on both leadership practices and stakeholder experiences, the study helps institutional leaders better understand the complexities of advising reform and offers actionable insights for guiding similar transitions in other community college settings.

Prior to the annual meeting, the study will complete mid-point data collection, including administration of the mid-implementation CBAM survey and most focus groups and interviews. Transcription and initial coding will begin immediately using the Constant Comparative Method. Early themes will be shared with the Implementation Committee to inform adjustments and encourage continuous feedback. Preliminary results will also be presented to a college-wide leadership group to facilitate broader institutional dialogue and support ongoing engagement in the advising transition.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Educator Prep, Gear-Up, Measurement

11:00 - 11:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Presentation type Discussion/Paper (Lecture)
Charlotte Parham

85 Leading for Belonging: Transforming Administrator Practice Coaching for Equity

Dr. Charlotte Parham

University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

This instrumental case study examines how targeted professional development through the GEAR UP initiative supported secondary administrators in reimagining their roles as equity-centered instructional leaders. Grounded in Adaptive Leadership and Coaching for Equity, the study explores how a two-day workshop, followed by ongoing virtual coaching, equipped nine high school administrators with tools to advance restorative practices, foster mattering and belonging, and adopt relational coaching stances. Drawing on mixed methods—quantitative self-assessments and qualitative interviews—the study investigates shifts in administrators' perceived readiness across three domains: restorative practices, adaptive leadership, and coaching stance.

Findings reveal substantial growth in participants' understanding and application of equity-centered leadership. Administrators reported moving beyond compliance-oriented mindsets to embrace practices that prioritize trust, teacher voice, and distributed leadership. Notably, coaching stance showed the most significant gains, with two-thirds of participants reporting readiness to apply this approach. Leaders described a deepened sense of relational accountability and reported increased staff trust and engagement. Additionally, participants began piloting restorative practices and reframing their leadership identities around collaboration rather than control.

This study addresses a critical gap in educational leadership research by focusing specifically on the transformation of administrators into student-success coaches within the context of college-readiness initiatives. It offers a replicable model for leadership development that integrates equity, instructional coaching, and adaptive mindsets. The findings suggest that investing in administrator coaching capacity has cascading benefits for school climate, teacher practice, and student experience, especially in schools serving historically marginalized populations.

By positioning mattering and belonging as foundational to adult learning and school change, the study contributes to a growing body of literature that reframes leadership as a humanizing practice. The GEAR UP model presented here demonstrates that equipping administrators with equity-informed coaching tools can serve as a high-leverage strategy for transforming schools into more inclusive, just, and supportive environments.

142 The Role of the Cooperating Teacher in the Pre-Service Teacher Journey”

Dr. Traci Johnson, Dr. Tami Shelley

Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, AL, USA

Abstract

Pre-service teacher preparation during internship is important and complex. Moreover, these are crucial relationships and roles represented during this educational journey. The cooperating teachers play a vital role and are typically eager and willing to collaborate with pre-service teachers. However, cooperating teachers, despite being experienced in pedagogy and teaching children, frequently need additional training in andragogy, adult education, and guidance concerning the significant role they fulfill during the internship process. As a result of the relationship, this paper highlights the need for better preparation of mentor teachers to support beginning educators effectively.

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109 The Measurement of Student Engagement Factors Among First-Year Student Success

Dr. Jarrod Benjamin, Dr. Walter Brown

Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, USA

Abstract

This study analyzes secondary data from the 2022 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) to investigate the relationship between student engagement and first-year success at four-year institutions. Using George Kuh’s (2009) theoretical framework, a quantitative approach examines the impact of factors such as faculty interactions, extracurricular participation, and enriching educational experiences on retention, academic performance, and collaborative learning. Responses from 44,274 first-year students were analyzed using regression and correlation techniques in SPSS.

Key findings show that active engagement with faculty and involvement in campus organizations significantly predict retention, with students being 0.898 to 1.528 times more likely to return. Extracurricular involvement demonstrated a weak positive correlation with collaborative learning behaviors ($r=0.12$ $r=0.12$ to 0.200.20, $p<.001$ $p<.001$). However, excessive involvement was weakly negatively correlated with retention intentions ($r=-0.05$ $r=-0.05$, $p<.001$ $p<.001$), possibly due to time management challenges. Enriching educational experiences, such as tutoring and advising, were linked to a 1.215 to 1.280 times greater likelihood of retention.

These results highlight the multidimensional nature of student engagement—encompassing cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects—as key predictors of academic success and persistence. The study emphasizes the need for balanced engagement strategies that are tailored to the diverse needs of students. Recommendations include enhancing faculty-student interactions, providing structured extracurricular opportunities, and expanding academic support services to promote student success during the crucial first year of college.

Symposium - Something Wicked This Way Comes: Innovative Approaches to Tackling Unrelenting Issues in Today's Educational Climate

11:00 - 11:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Tiffini Brigola

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176 Something Wicked This Way Comes: Innovative Approaches to Tackling Unrelenting Issues in Today's Educational Climate

Dr. Tiffini Brigola[1], Ms. Rena Bertrand[2], Ms. Noel Boutte[3], Mr. Justin Bueche[4], Ms. Catherine LeJeune[5], Ms. Candy Caesar[6]

[1]University of Louisiana Lafayette, Lafayette, LA, USA. [2]Vermilion Parish School, Gueydan, LA, USA. [3]Iberia Parish Schools, New Iberia, LA, USA. [4]Lafayette Parish School System, Lafayette, LA, USA. [5]Iberia Parish School Board, New Iberia, LA, USA. [6]St. Mary Parish Schools, Centerville, LA, USA

Abstract

K-12 education faces persistent and complex challenges often referred to as "wicked problems". These problems defy simple solutions, requiring innovative, systemic, and context-sensitive approaches. The purpose of this proposed presentation is two-fold: 1) to focus on defining and understanding the nature of wicked problems within educational settings and 2) to present a new model for authentic school improvement—*The Whole School Optimization Model* (WSOM)—that can guide educational leaders, policymakers, and practitioners in addressing these issues effectively.

Wicked problems in education are complex, multifaceted, and resistant to traditional, linear solutions. In contrast to "tame" problems, which are solvable through standard solutions, wicked problems do not have a single, definitive solution and often involve

many interconnected factors. Schools face these types of challenges every day, and because each school community is its own unique system with its own context and sets of internal and external factors, there is no one single blanket solution that is effective for all. For schools to optimize their resources and rally successfully and sustainably around authentic improvement initiatives, school leaders and the teams they build must shift their mindsets and approaches to solving the problems they face. By understanding the nature of wicked problems and approaching their own challenges as such, schools can overcome the obstacles in front of them to develop and sustain educational environments that, at the same time, support and develop student and teacher leaders who are prepared and motivated to use their talents, creativity, and dispositions to contribute to and participate in a diverse, global society.

Master's Candidates in our K-12 Educational Leadership Program have conducted research to identify wicked problems faced by their schools and plan innovative and authentic approaches to tackling them. These future school leaders have used the WSOM to address the following issues: 1) The Learning Curve for English Language Learners, 2) The Learning Experiences of Economically Disadvantaged Students, 3) Bullying, 4) The Teacher Recruitment and Retention Crisis, and 5) Schooling for High-Risk Students.

Current approaches to school improvement often focus on standardized measures of success—test scores, graduation rates, and other easily quantifiable data. However, such methods do not always address the deeper, more systemic issues at play in K-12 education, and can inadvertently perpetuate inequities and limit the potential for authentic, sustainable change. A shift is needed toward a model that acknowledges the complexity of the challenges schools face, and that encourages collaborative, context-driven solutions. The WSOM proposed in this presentation is grounded in the principles of system thinking, collaborative leadership, and innovative, expert teacher leadership.

Wicked problems in education require a departure from conventional improvement models that focus on short-term results. This new model for authentic school improvement offers a more holistic, inclusive, and adaptive approach, helping schools navigate the complexities they face while fostering lasting, meaningful change. By adopting the WSOM, educators and leaders can build schools that are resilient, responsive to community needs, and committed to equity for all students.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - AI

11:00 - 11:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Rachel Dunbar

172 Systematic Review of AI in Higher Education

Ms. Heather Butler, Ms. Sonja Sheffield, Dr. Angela Rand, Ms. Elizabeth Shepard

University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama, USA

Abstract

Introduction

The popular release of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT and Gemini, and their increasing availability and ease of use, have significantly impacted the educational landscape (Ali et al., 2024; Seker et al., 2025; Walter, 2024). AI tools can support personalized learning experiences and time savings for repetitive tasks, but they also introduce a complex array of problems (Seker et al., 2025).

This presentation will provide a review of the literature on AI use in higher education. Using the PRISMA protocol outlined by Stracke et al. (2023), this study aims to replicate the systematic review conducted by Zawaki-Richter et al. (2019). This research will provide both an overview of the literature as well as a thematic synthesis of the nature and scope of higher education AI use in the published literature since 2019.

Presentation

This systematic review will replicate an earlier systematic review conducted by Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019). This study's research methodology will follow Stracke et al.'s (2023) standardized four-step protocol based on PRISMA. This systematic review will include literature published from December 2018 to July 2025 found through Web of Science, Scopus, and EBSCO Education Complete, using the same search terms as the Zawakci-Richter et al. study (2019).

Method

This presentation will address the following research questions:

Research Questions:

RQ1: How have publications on AI in higher education developed over time, in which journals are they published, and where are they coming from in terms of geographical distribution and the authors' disciplinary affiliations?

RQ2: How is AI in education conceptualised, and what kind of ethical implications, challenges, and risks are considered?

RQ3: What is the nature and scope of AI applications in the context of higher education?

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria for this study are: Journal articles published in peer-reviewed journals, in English, indexed in EBSCO Education Source, Web of Science, and/or Scopus, with a focus on artificial intelligence in higher education, and include empirical, primary research.

Exclusion criteria are: articles not indexed by those three databases, in non-English languages, without a focus on higher education and artificial intelligence, without primary research, without a learning setting, conference proceedings, and any research product that is not a journal article.

Significance of Study

This research seeks to offer a timely and methodologically robust contribution to the scholarship on AI and education. Ng et al (2023) noted an urgent need for pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning with and for AI. This systematic review will replicate Zawaki-Richter et al. (2019) and contribute to the body of scholarship on AI teaching and learning and will help validate Stracke's protocol. This research will illustrate the rapidly changing landscape of AI applications within higher education, identify emerging trends in AI use, gaps in the literature, and demonstrate the effectiveness of Stracke et al.'s (2023) model. This study will be useful to administrators, faculty, educators, and researchers as it will help inform new policies in higher education, curricula creation, practice in the classroom, and identify research gaps.

References

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Walter, Y. (2024). Embracing the future of Artificial Intelligence in the classroom: the relevance of AI literacy, prompt engineering, and critical thinking in modern education. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, *21*(1), 15.

Zawacki-Richter, O., Marín, V. I., Bond, M., & Gouverneur, F. (2019). Systematic review of research on artificial intelligence applications in higher education–where are the educators?. *International journal of educational technology in higher education*, *16*(1), 1-27.

AI Disclosure: AI Use

The author acknowledges the limited use of AI-assisted tools in the preparation of this paper. Specifically, Gemini was used to aid in reducing the author's written abstract to the limited 500 words. AI-generated material was critically evaluated by the human author. The author affirms that all ideas, substantive analysis, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this study are the result of human intellectual effort.

49 Teaching Ethical AI Use Through Video: Student Perspectives and Instructor Reflections on Pedagogical Design

Dr. Daphne Smith, Dr. Tim Watkins

Delta State University, Cleveland, MS, USA

Abstract

As generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, become increasingly prevalent in higher education, students often engage with these technologies without a clear understanding of ethical boundaries (Moor, 2006; Cotton et al., 2023). While recent studies emphasize the importance of helping students assess the accuracy and relevance of AI-generated content (Albadarin et al., 2024; Yan et al., 2024), a notable gap remains in research on effective strategies for integrating AI literacy into the curriculum. Much of the existing literature emphasizes detection and prevention of misconduct rather than proactive, instructional approaches. This study addresses that gap by analyzing student responses to a peer-reviewed instructional video on the ethical and unethical use of AI and exploring how their reflections inform future pedagogical design.

Grounded in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (2014), which emphasizes reflective observation and active experimentation, this basic qualitative study investigates two research questions: (1) What elements of video-based instruction contribute to shifts in students' ethical awareness? and (2) How do student reflections inform future instructional strategies for AI ethics in higher education? A basic qualitative research design was selected to explore how students interpret and make meaning of their experiences with AI ethics instruction, as well as to understand how those interpretations may influence their future academic behavior and expectations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Undergraduate and graduate students at a public university in Mississippi viewed a department-developed instructional video that clarified the appropriate and inappropriate uses of AI in coursework. Thematic analysis of their structured written reflections revealed that students found clarity, relatability, and real-world relevance to be helpful aspects. Many reported greater confidence in making ethical decisions, improved understanding of institutional expectations, and a more informed view of AI as both a tool and a potential risk.

Instructor reflections complemented these findings, noting an increase in students' experimental use of AI. They also revealed, however, that students remain hesitant to acknowledge their use of AI tools through proper citations or required AI usage statements, indicating a lingering discomfort or uncertainty around transparency in AI-assisted work. These results support the use of short, video-based ethics instruction, grounded in experiential learning, as a scalable and practical model for promoting ethical awareness in higher education. The study contributes to the emerging literature on AI pedagogy by highlighting replicable instructional strategies that support academic integrity and prepare students for ethical engagement with AI in contemporary learning environments.

129 A Longitudinal Case Study of Faculty Perceptions and Adoption of AI in College Teaching

Ms. Kailea Manning, Dr. Katelyn Nelson, Dr. David Marshall, Ms. Hannah Hong

Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA

Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has become increasingly present in higher education, offering tools that range from generative writing platforms to automated grading and research support. While student use of AI has surged, faculty engagement remains varied, often shaped by personal attitudes, perceived risks, and institutional context. Instructors are not only users of these tools but also gatekeepers of how AI is introduced, modeled, and discussed in academic environments. As AI tools become more accessible and integrated into everyday teaching tasks, it is essential to understand how faculty perceptions and use of AI are shifting over time.

This qualitative case study explored how faculty members' perceptions and teaching-related use of AI have evolved across one academic year. This study expanded on a previous investigation conducted in Fall 2024, which examined faculty's initial attitudes toward AI use in teaching. In this follow-up phase, participants were re-interviewed to examine how their views and practices had changed, particularly in response to growing exposure, campus conversations, and developments in available technologies.

The study took place within a College of Education at a large public research university in the Southeastern United States. The research team conducted semi-structured follow-up interviews with 22 full-time faculty members who participated in the original study. Interviews were transcribed and thematically analyzed using ATLAS.ti version 24. The analytic process was grounded in a case study methodology, using both a priori codes informed by the original study and emergent themes derived from the follow-up data. No AI-assisted coding was used.

Preliminary findings suggest that faculty remain attentive to concerns such as academic dishonesty and student overreliance on AI; however, many now report increased familiarity and openness to using AI. Instructors described leveraging AI tools to support grading, assist with research organization, and streamline administrative work. One participant reflected, *"I was mostly concerned with students using it to cheat… but now I also see more of its potential for students and faculty,"* highlighting a shift in mindset as exposure to AI tools increased. Another participant described a change in their usage practices, explaining, *"One of the things that really changed is how I use them. So I'm getting better at prompting,"* and added, *"I've gotten a lot better at how I curate the*

information… it's helping me find what I need." Together, these perspectives reflect a gradual move from caution to more strategic and reflective engagement.

While comfort with AI tools is increasing among many faculty, findings also highlight the continued need for guidance, especially around setting expectations for student use and creating course-level policies. Instructors expressed a desire for clearer examples of acceptable use and institutional support that is tailored to disciplinary contexts. This paper will present key findings from the follow-up interviews, offering practical insights into how faculty are navigating AI adoption in real time. We will conclude with recommendations for professional development, faculty peer learning communities, and strategies for promoting thoughtful, ethical use of AI in college teaching.

MSERA Keynote Speaker Luncheon - Ticket Required

12:00 - 14:00 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025

Keynote Speaker Luncheon-Invited Address

TICKETED EVENT: Attendees must have purchased a Keynote Luncheon Event Ticket with Registration Prior to 10.24.25

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Teaching Profession

14:00 - 14:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Presentation type Discussion/Paper (Lecture)
Andrew Pendola

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10 Identifying Shocks and Leaving Scripts amongst Teachers in Alabama

Dr. Andrew Pendola, -- Jennifer Meuller, -- Kari Smith-Murphy

Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA

Abstract

The current rate of teacher turnover is a problem felt globally, particularly as it is a major driver of teacher shortages. Researchers and policymakers worldwide have long been working to develop strategies to keep teachers in the profession, particularly as

shortages are most prevalent in high-needs rural and urban schools. While there is a growing body of policy strategies for improving retention, broad-based interventions such as increased professional development or long-term salary increases are not always realistic for the high-needs, under-resourced schools that are most impacted.

In addition, although there is a robust body of literature on the correlates of teacher turnover, much of the research in the field has conceptualized teacher turnover as a single event based on inputs and outputs, rather than a highly emotional process of sequential decisions that unfold over time. Indeed, relatively little attention has been paid to the specific *process* by which teachers leave—including the sequence of dispositions, events, and choices that take place before actually leaving a position. Exploring the events and choices within the teacher turnover process offers an opportunity to not only identify those who may be in the early stages of leaving, but may also help to develop specific interventions to retain high-quality teachers before it is too late.

As a result, this study seeks to build an understanding of how the process of teacher leaving occurs. Drawing from Lee and Mitchell's 'unfolding model' of turnover (1994), we explore common 'last straw' events that teachers see as the triggers for leaving their position, as well as the 'leaving script' of plans made once a teacher decides to leave. We approach this with an exploratory sequential mixed methods approach, which combines focus groups, a representative survey of 550 teachers in the U.S. state of Alabama, and social sequence analysis (SSQA). We ask the following research questions: (1) *What are the most common last straw events for teachers?* (2) *What are the common leaving scripts?* (3) *Which scripts are triggered by last straw events?* From focus groups, we identify six major 'last straw' events and seven 'leaving script' steps. We find that (1) immoral or corrupt administrative actions are the most prominent last straw event for otherwise committed teachers; (2) the majority of teachers would begin preparing to leave by updating their resume first and telling their school last; and (3) both the types of last straw events and leaving scripts tend to be consistent across teacher characteristics. As a major goal of this research, these results offer several implications for practice and policy to improve teacher retention. Gaining a broader understanding of the main last straw events and leaving scripts will not only help to further develop a domain-specific application of the unfolding model but may also help build a foundation to begin testing interventions for dissatisfied or triggered teachers.

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20 **Measuring Teacher Burnout: Validation of a Brief Emotional Exhaustion Scale**

Dr. Tim Pressley[1], Dr. David Marshall[2], Dr. Heather Walter[3]

[1]Christopher Newport University, Newport News, VA, USA. [2]Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA. [3]George Mason University, Fairfax, VA, USA

Abstract

Teacher burnout, particularly emotional exhaustion, has a significant impact on educator retention and student outcomes. Despite extensive literature on teacher well-being, existing instruments often lack brevity, specificity, or accessibility. To address these gaps, this study developed and validated a concise Emotional Exhaustion scale tailored explicitly for current educational contexts. Drawing upon existing research on teacher burnout, we initially generated items reflective of emotional exhaustion as a chronic state of emotional and physical depletion. This concise scale, developed with direct teacher input through Delphi studies and focus groups, enables school administrators and researchers to efficiently measure emotional exhaustion without adding undue burden on teachers. The item pool underwent rigorous psychometric refinement through multiple pilots involving diverse samples totaling over 2,000 K-12 teachers nationwide. We employed exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, internal consistency reliability assessments (Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega), and established concurrent validity using the widely recognized Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES). Findings indicated that the five-item Emotional Exhaustion scale demonstrated excellent reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .933, omega = .935) and strong concurrent validity (correlation with MBI-ES emotional exhaustion subscale, $r = .89$, $p < .001$). Confirmatory factor analyses provided robust support for the scale's factor structure across multiple nationally representative samples, with fit indices (CFI = .990, TLI = .975, SRMR = .017), suggesting excellent model fit. Practical implications include aiding administrators in identifying educators at risk of burnout, facilitating targeted interventions, and ultimately supporting teacher retention and improved student outcomes.

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1 The Impact of Mentorship on Novice Teacher Retention at a Rural Public High School: A Phenomenological Study

Dr. Rachel Hattaway, Dr. Amy Weems

University of Louisiana Monroe, Monroe, LA, USA

Abstract

Although teaching is generally considered a rewarding profession, there is a dark reality connected to the field: teacher attrition. Teacher attrition has long been a significant issue in the education sector, but it has intensified over the past decade, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Novice teacher turnover is particularly concerning, with over half of new educators leaving the profession by their fifth year. Although many states experience significant rates of novice teacher attrition, Louisiana has been heavily impacted: in 2021, approximately 74% of departing Louisiana teachers were

leaving the profession (Bellows et al., 2021). Although a significant amount of research exists capturing the perspectives of novice teachers' views on attrition, the perspectives of the mentors and other stakeholders who work with novice educators is rarely found in the literature. Therefore, the purpose of this phenomenological study was to determine how mentorship at one rural Louisiana public high school affected novice teacher retention. The inquiry focused on the mentors' experiences and expectations. Participants included two administrators, four mentor teachers, four novice teachers, and the district director of personnel, bringing a diverse range of perspectives from a variety of stakeholders with educational experience spanning from three to nearly thirty years. Data were collected through interviews and surveys, providing a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and potential strategies for retaining novice teachers.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Social Studies, Literacy, & Reading Instruction

14:00 - 14:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Presentation type Discussion/Paper (Lecture)
Keicia Hawkins

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17 Building Resilience in Underresourced Schools: Transformative Literacy Leadership for Educational Excellence

Dr. Earlisha Whitfield[1], Dr. Keicia Hawkins[2]

[1]University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL, USA. [2]Northwestern State University, Natchitoches,, LA, USA

Abstract

This qualitative research examines successful literacy initiatives and strategies in high-poverty, high-literacy states to serve as a model for similar demographics. The study analyzes the role of personalized instruction and interventions in improving literacy. Qualitative methods, including content analysis of state literacy plans, were used to collect data. The identified themes for analysis include core components of reading, literacy interventions, progress monitoring, and professional development. The research is grounded in the Sociocognitive Theory. The study aims to identify effective strategies and interventions that can address the challenges of literacy achievement in high-poverty schools. By examining state literacy plans of high poverty states that have proved effective in literacy achievement, we can promote equitable access to quality education and begin to overcome barriers to the flawed systems that perpetuate inequality. This study seeks to create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment that empowers all students to thrive academically and socially, ultimately promoting upward mobility and reducing disparities in literacy outcomes and life.

44 Building Literacy Leaders: Strategic Implementation of Foundational Phonics Curriculum in K-2 Classrooms

Dr. Miranda Allen, Dr. Julie Cappo, Dr. Dustin Whitlock, Dr. Elizabeth Manning, Dr. Kimberly Kimbell-Lopez

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, Louisiana, USA

Abstract

Current research, known as the Science of Reading (SOR), has drastically impacted our understanding of how the brain learns to read, leading to a pivotal shift from a balanced literacy approach to a structured one. Structured literacy instruction involves the highly explicit and systematic teaching of all essential literacy components, including foundational skills such as decoding and encoding, as well as higher-level literacy skills, such as comprehension and writing. When schools and teachers implement strong, structured literacy instruction in early childhood and elementary classrooms, they better meet the needs of all learners, including children with dyslexia. With sufficient direct instruction on the foundational skills of reading, ninety-five percent of students can learn to read. For this reason, it is imperative that all K-2 teachers, current and future, be trained in how to implement effective structured literacy lessons using a research-based foundational literacy skills curriculum.

In light of this new research, a regional university offering an educator preparation program (EPP) recognized the need for reading program realignment. It began implementing a SOR research-based approach to foundational reading instruction. Early childhood and elementary teacher candidates in the EPP began learning to provide structured literacy lessons using a foundational skills curriculum, gaining knowledge in explicit and systematic strategies for teaching phonics through their literacy coursework. Then, support began being provided to K-2 teachers within the regional school system to implement the same foundational skills curriculum, called UFLI Foundations. UFLI, from the University of Florida Literacy Institute, is based on the SOR and provides a multisensory, structured literacy approach to teaching phonics. What began as an initial goal of implementing a new phonics curriculum in reading methods courses organically evolved into building literacy leaders, with teacher candidates from the EPP working side by side with their mentor teachers from the regional school system to implement the new, research-based curriculum.

Using the Science of Reading as a theoretical lens, the aim of this study was to understand the impacts of implementing a foundational phonics curriculum in K-2 classrooms. A mixed methods design was used to identify the effects of a structured literacy program on students' foundational reading skills by analyzing BOY, MOY, and

EOY K-3 Literacy Screener scores, also referred to as DIBELS. The accessible population consisted of six schools, including 85 classrooms and 96 teachers from one north Louisiana school district. Quantitative data collection included DIBELS composite scores and subtest scores for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years. Researchers are analyzing quantitative data to examine the growth trajectory of students who have participated in the UFLI Foundations curriculum, as measured by DIBELS. Data from the 2023-2024 school year will be compared to that from the 2024-2025 school year to determine the impact. Data source triangulation was employed by collecting qualitative data to facilitate comparisons with significant quantitative findings. Teacher observations, or walk-throughs, were conducted, and the observation data will be analyzed using a UFLI Dosage, Adherence, and Quality Rubric adapted from a UFLI Adherence model. Data analysis is currently ongoing, and results are pending.

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22 The Three P's: Political Polarization, Perception, and Pedagogy

Dr. Tianka Sheard Mitchell

Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR, USA

Abstract

ABSTRACT
Tianka R. Sheard Mitchell
THE THREE P's: POLITICAL POLARIZATION, PERCEPTION, AND PEDAGOGY

Political polarization increasingly affects education, particularly in social studies, where teachers must navigate sensitive and controversial topics. This study explored two research questions: how social studies teachers perceive political polarization and how these perceptions influence their pedagogy.

Guided by Reconstructionist Educational Theory, which emphasizes critical thinking and civic engagement, this research examined whether political polarization leads educators to alter their instructional approaches—especially regarding "hard history." Avoiding such topics can diminish students' cultural literacy and critical inquiry.

Using a phenomenological design, the study focused on the lived experiences of twenty middle school social studies teachers across urban, suburban, and rural districts in Arkansas. Participants responded to eight open-ended and one multiple-choice question regarding their pedagogical decisions amid political tension.

Findings indicated that most teachers felt impacted by polarization, especially concerning race, LGBTQIA+ topics, and recent elections. While many emphasized neutrality and empathy in facilitating classroom discourse, fewer than half reported intentions to leave the profession or shift roles due to the strain. Nonetheless, all

expressed concern about the long-term impact on students and the integrity of civic education.

This study fills a gap in research around middle-level educators' responses to political division. Its implications extend beyond K-12 education to higher education and other fields, highlighting an urgent need for support. Policymakers and educational leaders are called to address the challenges posed by political polarization and to safeguard the role of social studies educators in promoting democratic citizenship.

Keywords: political polarization, social studies, controversial issues, pedagogy, teacher perception, education

RiP Lecture - Teaching Profession

14:00 - 14:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Lecture)
Stephanie Cheramie

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234 Educator Perceptions of Virtual Services to Improve Mental Health Supports in Rural Schools

Ms. Olivia King DeBerry

Mississippi State University, Meridian, MS, USA

Abstract

Abstract

School psychologists play a vital role in supporting student mental health, implementing behavioral interventions, promoting academic success, and fostering safe and supportive school climates. However, many rural school districts operate with significant shortages of school psychologists, often relying on these professionals almost exclusively for special education eligibility evaluations and underutilizing their broader expertise in mental health, consultation, and preventive services (Fenning et al., 2023; NASP, 2020). This shortage leaves critical gaps in access to behavioral and mental health services, placing students at risk for unmet mental health needs, academic challenges, and long-term negative outcomes.

In response to these challenges, innovative service delivery tools, including telehealth, regional consultation, and virtual assessments, have emerged as potential solutions to extend the reach of school psychologists and increase student access to mental health supports. Yet, despite the growing interest in virtual services, barriers such as limited administrative understanding, role confusion among school-based professionals, and concerns about feasibility hinder widespread adoption (Eklund et al., 2019).

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Practice Model (2020). Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for understanding how school psychologists' roles, innovative virtual services, and educators' perceptions intersect within complex educational environments, particularly in rural settings. Applying the Ecological Systems Theory allows for an analysis of how barriers and supports at each systemic level influence the adoption and sustainability of virtual mental health services in rural schools. The NASP Practice Model (2020) provides a professional and ethical framework defining the comprehensive range of services that school psychologists are trained to deliver. The framework emphasizes a shift from reactive, assessment-heavy roles toward a more balanced integration of consultation, mental health support, and academic intervention.

Research Question(s) and Relevant Literature

The research study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do school psychologists in rural districts use virtual services, such as telehealth, regional consultation, and virtual assessments, to deliver behavioral and mental health support?
2. What are rural educators' perceptions of the effectiveness and feasibility of virtual services provided by school psychologists?
3. How do school psychologists perceive the impact of virtual services on student behavioral and mental health outcomes in rural districts?
4. What barriers influence the adoption and implementation of virtual services for mental health support in rural schools?

Researchers have emphasized the urgent need for innovative approaches to deliver mental health services in schools, given rising behavioral and emotional challenges among students (Baghian et al., 2023; Perfect & Morris, 2011). Studies also suggest that virtual service delivery, including telehealth and virtual consultations, can expand access and reduce stigma in underserved communities (Crespi, 2009; Maag & Katsiyannis, 2010). However, implementation is often hindered by administrative concerns, unclear roles, and skepticism from educators and staff (Schaffer et al., 2023). Thus, there is a critical need to understand educators' perceptions of virtual service models, as these perceptions are key to sustainable change and improved student outcomes.

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

This research will use a mixed-methods approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic. An initial survey was piloted among school psychologists and related professionals at Mississippi State University's school and clinical psychology programs.

Following revisions for clarity and comprehensiveness, the updated survey will be distributed to a broader sample, including school psychologists, administrators, and educators in rural or under-resourced districts. To enrich the quantitative findings, qualitative interviews will be conducted with educators and school psychologists to gather deeper insights into their experiences, perceptions, and recommendations regarding virtual mental health services.

Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

Data for this study will be collected using a mixed-methods approach designed to capture both quantitative trends and rich qualitative insights. This survey draws directly from the NASP Practice Model (2020) and includes items assessing participants' engagement in virtual service delivery (e.g., telehealth, regional consultation, virtual assessments), perceived barriers and facilitators to implementing these services, and interest in expanding professional roles.

The combined use of survey responses and qualitative narratives will provide comprehensive evidence to examine how innovative virtual service models are perceived and utilized in rural educational settings, informing strategies to expand mental health supports for students.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Preliminary findings from the pilot survey suggest a significant gap between school psychologists' training and the roles they are currently able to fulfill. Many professionals expressed interest in providing mental health services, consultation, and broader school-wide interventions but reported limitations due to high evaluation caseloads and administrative priorities.

It is anticipated that the broader study will reveal both enthusiasm and hesitations about virtual service models, highlighting the crucial role of educator perceptions and systemic supports in determining whether these innovations can become sustainable solutions for improving mental health services in rural schools.

Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution to the Field

This study will contribute to the field of school psychology by identifying innovative strategies such as telehealth, regional consultation, and virtual staffing. The anticipated findings will inform policy, training, and advocacy efforts, and may guide

districts in restructuring service delivery in ways that better support student mental health needs, such as expanding the role of the school psychologist beyond special education eligibility. By aligning findings with NASP's Practice Model, the research supports efforts to reduce stigma, enhance access to mental health services, and promote systems-level change that promotes better learning environments.

Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Prior to the Annual Meeting

Between now and the Annual Meeting, the following steps are anticipated:

1. Finalize the updated survey instrument for broader use and submitting the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application.
2. Upon IRB approval, begin participant recruitment with a focus on school psychologists, administrators, and staff from rural or under-resourced districts.
3. Conduct additional interviews or focus groups with school-based professionals to support survey data.
4. Continue literature review to ensure alignment of research questions with theoretical frameworks and NASP domains.

227 Middle School Educators' Perceptions of Learner Engagement in an Online Learning Environment

-- Stephanie Cheramie

University of Louisiana Monroe, Monroe, Louisiana, USA

Abstract

The study examines middle school teachers at a public K-12 online school in South Louisiana, documenting their perceptions and experiences regarding learner engagement in an online learning environment. As education moves toward more online learning environments, educators need to understand the components of online learning to use digital tools and instructional practices to promote engagement because engagement is closely linked to academic performance (Alrashidi, 2016). Online learning communities have contributed to the knowledge of understanding the challenges and benefits of online education in K-12 online schools. This study addresses important gaps by investigating the strategies middle school teachers use to increase online learner engagement by examining how components through the OCL theory model lens contribute to sustained engagement. The OCL theory offers a robust framework for fostering deeper cognitive engagement, collaboration, and critical thinking

in online learning environments, making it an essential tool for educators seeking to enhance the quality and impact of digital education.

The significance of this study is in its focus on the less frequently researched area of middle school teacher perceptions on engagement in online education within K-12 public online schools. Although several studies have emphasized the significance of online engagement for effective learning, a research gap exists in determining the instructional strategies that are conducive to increasing student engagement from middle school teachers' perspectives in online schools. Bridging this gap, this study investigates the strategies teachers find most effective in promoting increased learner engagement in an online learning environment. By providing these teachers with a way to voice their opinions, the study could provide valuable information of what is most effective in online education for teachers and students alike.

As online education programs continue to increase globally, the methods of how online students can be successful is of interest to parents, online education teachers, school administrators, and teacher certification programs. The purpose of this study is to examine middle school teachers' perceptions of the learner engagement students face in an online learning environment. This study utilizes a bounded case study design using a survey followed by interviews, which will be administered to middle school online education teachers in a K-12 online education program in South Louisiana. At present, few researchers have attempted to identify the instructional strategies that are conducive to increasing student engagement in middle school students in online learning, which could prevent students from overcoming challenges and achieving success virtually. The evolution of online education, from its origins in correspondence courses to the current digital age, highlights the transformative impact of technology on learning, offering both new opportunities and challenges for educators and students alike. The rapid shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted both the potential and challenges of digital education. The spread of COVID-19 negatively impacted academic performance, while bringing online learning to the center stage. Due to inadequate student-teacher interactions, insufficient online student interactions, limited online learner – content interactions, and technology constraints, it is more difficult to engage and maintain elevated levels of engagement compared to traditional classroom setting (Wang & Huang, 2024). Engagement is important to academic success, and students must partake in educational activities, especially in a digital setting (Plak, 2023; van Klaveren, 2023; Cornelisz, 2023). The pandemic has revealed that while online learning offers many benefits, maintaining engagement and addressing the unique challenges it presents remains crucial for academic success.

The topic of increased student engagement was studied by Ha and Im (2020), who found that interactive tools in an online learning setting can increase students' attention, curiosity, and interest in the learning task. The researchers found the importance of utilizing course activities to boost student engagement; concluding that collaboration tools have a positive effect on student engagement. Jiang et al. (2024) conducted a study on student engagement and found a positive correlation between academic performance and engagement. Engagement in learning is a complex concept involving

intellectual and behavioral components requiring interactions between participants, meaningful feedback, and technology (Finn & Zimmer, 2012).

This current study is supported by Harasim's (2012) online collaborative learning theory (OCL), a construct within the constructive paradigm. The OCL theory provides the theoretical framework for this research, allowing for analysis on how teachers use digitals tools to engage students in their online learning environment, which can be essential for building interactions and increase engagement leading to student success (Steinburg, 2021). OCL theory cultivated the study's design, directed the methodology, and is the foundation for interpreting the results within the confines of existing research on the theory and learner engagement in an online learning environment. This study's goal is to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1: What are effective strategies to enhance online engagement in an online middle school setting as perceived by teachers?
- RQ2: What key factors impact a student's online engagement in a middle school setting online education as perceived by teachers?
- RQ3: What support is needed to facilitate effective engagement in online middle schools?

This study utilizes a qualitative, bounded case study approach grounded in constructivism that explores online educators' perceptions of learner engagement. By focusing on a single online learning environment, the research aims to capture the diverse perspectives of educators and provide a deeper understanding of the factors influencing learner engagement in an online setting. Nine interview questions developed by Pak (2024) were designated to answer the three research questions at the foundation of this research study. Data collection will occur in a two-week time frame. Participants will be determined based on the selection criteria, aimed at creating a diverse group of educators with diverse perceptions of the learner's engagement in an online learning environment. Using convenience sampling, educators will be selected across multiple middle school grade levels and years of experience in online teaching (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Preliminary research reveals essential insights into strengthening online student engagement such as identifying and promoting active participation, building connections, and interactive curriculum design as the most effective. Anticipated progress or next steps prior to the Annual Meeting is getting IRB approval, contacting the superintendent and principal, and begin collecting data.

248 EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPANISH L1 LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION AND ENGLISH L2 READING COMPREHENSION: A META-ANALYSIS

Ms. Tiffany Anderson, Dr. Janna McClain, Dr. Yucheng Cao

Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN, USA

Abstract

Spanish-speaking bi/multilingual learners represent the largest subgroup of English learners in the education system. Despite this, they consistently face persistent achievement gaps in reading, a pattern that reflects more than just student performance. These disparities are driven by systemic inequities in instruction, assessment practices, and linguistic bias in curricular design (August & Shanahan, 2006; NCES, 2019). While previous research explores the cross-linguistic transfer of foundational literacy skills such as phonological awareness, the influence of higher-order Spanish L1 language comprehension skills, on English L2 reading comprehension remains significantly under-analyzed.

This research in progress presents a meta-analysis aimed at addressing this critical gap. The study synthesizes empirical evidence on the relationship between Spanish L1 language comprehension and English L2 reading comprehension among K– students in the United States. In doing so, it seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the components of language comprehension in students' first language (L1) contribute to their second language (L2) reading proficiency. Additionally, this project explores how instructional setting, assessment type, language of assessment, and sociolinguistic context serve as potential moderators of this relationship. Ultimately, this work has been positioned to offer actionable insights for designing linguistically inclusive literacy instruction and informing equitable education policies for Spanish-speaking MLLs.

The theoretical grounding of this study integrates cognitive, sociocultural, and critical frameworks. At the center is Scarborough's Reading Rope (2001), which conceptualizes language comprehension as a multi-component construct involving background knowledge, vocabulary, syntax, and verbal reasoning. This framework is embedded within Cummins' (1981) Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis and Common Underlying Proficiency model, which posit that well-developed L1 skills can positively transfer to L2 literacy outcomes. In addition, sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) guide the study's attention to the broader social and instructional contexts in which language development occurs. The research is further informed by critical theories such as translanguaging (García & Wei, 2014) and raciolinguistic ideologies (Flores & Rosa, 2015), which highlight the need to

validate/ leverage multilingual learners' full linguistic repertoires within schooling systems that often marginalize them.

The meta-analysis is guided by two research questions:

1. What is the relationship between Spanish L1 language comprehension and English L2 reading comprehension?
2. What factors, such as instructional setting, assessment type, language of assessment, and sociolinguistic context moderate the relationship between Spanish L1language comprehension and English L2 reading comprehension?

Previous syntheses have centered on foundational skills such as phonological awareness (e.g., Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2011; Zhang & Zhang, 2022), without systematically examining the full set of language comprehension components identified in Scarborough's framework. This study offers a more holistic and contextualized analysis of cross-linguistic transfer by disaggregating these components and incorporating moderator analyses.

A meta-analytic design will be used to synthesize empirical findings from studies reporting correlational data between Spanish L1 language comprehension and English L2 comprehension outcomes. Effect sizes will be computed using Pearson's r and analyzed using random-effects multilevel models implemented in R, with the *metafor* and *clubSandwich* packages (Viechtbauer, 2010; Pustejovsky, 2020). Robust Variance Estimation (RVE) will be applied where necessary to handle dependencies among effect sizes reported within the same study.

Moderator analyses will explore how instructional setting (e.g., bilingual vs. English-only programs), assessment type (e.g., standardized vs. researcher-developed measures), language of assessment (Spanish vs. English), and sociolinguistic context influence the strength and direction of cross-linguistic relationships. Sensitivity analyses will be conducted to evaluate assumptions regarding effect size dependence and the robustness of observed patterns.

The sample will be drawn from peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and theses that meet the following inclusion criteria:

- Participants must be K–8 students enrolled in U.S. schools.
- Studies must use a quantitative design and report correlations or convertible statistics.
- The study must include at least one measure of Spanish L1 language comprehension and one of English L2 reading comprehension.
- Publications must be in English or Spanish.

Searches are being conducted across several platfoms, including ERIC and ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. The screening process is managed using Rayyan.ai, with two reviewers conducting full-text screening and interrater reliability checks on a

subsample. A structured coding manual is also being utilized to extract and relevant data.

While the analysis is ongoing, preliminary expectations, based on existing literature and theory, suggest that Spanish L1 language comprehension will exhibit a moderate to strong positive correlation with English L2 reading comprehension. Among the components of language comprehension, vocabulary, syntax, and verbal reasoning are anticipated to demonstrate the strongest transfer effects. It is also expected that students in bilingual or dual-language instructional settings will show enhanced cross-linguistic transfer, due to sustained development and validation of both languages. In contrast, instructional models that emphasize English-only instruction may suppress the potential for such transfer, due to subtractive language ideologies. Additionally, the assessment type and language of the measure may influence effect size magnitudes and patterns.

This study makes several scholarly contributions. First, it represents the first meta-analysis to systematically examine higher-order language comprehension transfer from Spanish L1 to English L2 reading using Scarborough's Reading Rope as an organizing framework. Second, by analyzing contextual moderators, it addresses critical gaps in our understanding of when and how transfer is most likely to occur. Third, it challenges deficit-based narratives that portray multilingualism as a barrier by centering students' linguistic assets. Finally, the study offers clear, evidence-based implications for designing equitable literacy instruction, improving assessment practices, and shaping policies that reflect the diverse language experiences of multilingual learners.

Before the MSERA Annual Meeting, the project will reach several key milestones: completion of full-text screening, data extraction, and interrater reliability checks; calculation of initial effect sizes; and implementation of multilevel meta-analytic models. Moderator and sensitivity analyses will be initiated, and a working draft of findings will be compiled. Visual tools such as a PRISMA diagram and preliminary model visualizations will also be prepared to facilitate discussion and feedback from conference participants.

Through this work, the project aims to contribute to a more comprehensive and asset-oriented understanding of bilingual literacy development, ultimately advocating for instructional and policy practices that affirm and build upon the linguistic resources Spanish-speaking MLLs bring to the classroom.

Symposium - Bridging the Miles: Collaboration Strategies for Statewide GEAR UP Success

14:00 - 14:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Charlotte Parham

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215 Bridging the Miles: Collaboration Strategies for Statewide GEAR UP Success

Ms. Amanda Viikinsalo[1], Dr. Michelle Hayes[1], Dr. Charlotte Parham[2]

[1]College Admissions Made Possible, Birmingham, AL, USA. [2]Gear Up South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Abstract

Serving students across a wide geographic area presents unique challenges—especially when educational programs must scale across both rural and urban contexts. Distance, varying access to certified instructors, inconsistent infrastructure, and disparate district priorities can hinder student achievement and weaken implementation fidelity. However, strategic collaboration across institutions, communities, and state lines offers a powerful solution. This symposium brings together three leading organizations—**GEAR UP South Carolina**, **GEAR UP Arkansas**, and **College Admissions Made Possible (CAMP)**—to explore how state-level initiatives can unite stakeholders, share resources, and implement scalable student support solutions that elevate college and career readiness across diverse educational landscapes.

This session is grounded in real-world application and features directors and senior staff who have developed and sustained systems that serve thousands of students across multiple counties and states. Drawing on years of experience, each panelist will offer specific strategies that have proven effective in overcoming geographic and systemic barriers. These include how to use statewide and regional data to guide program design, how to integrate ACT prep and college advising into school-day and after-school models, and how to secure meaningful partnerships that create consistency across varied delivery environments.

A centerpiece of this session will be the work of **College Admissions Made Possible (CAMP)**, a regional leader in equitable college access and academic achievement. With operations across Alabama and the Southeastern U.S., CAMP has built a two-tiered approach to postsecondary preparation. CAMP 1.0 focuses on academic interventions—ACT Boot Camps, push-in and pull-out tutoring, diagnostic assessments, and targeted classroom supports. CAMP 2.0, meanwhile, addresses the broader ecosystem of college access: FAFSA completion, college tours, resume building, career exposure, and soft skills development. CAMP's structure allows districts to select

services based on data-informed needs, while maintaining cohesion through a shared mission of student-centered, culturally relevant programming.

CAMP's model is deeply rooted in the principle that data should drive decision-making at every level. The team regularly uses pre- and post-test assessments to measure student growth and adapt instruction, while school-level dashboards help teachers and administrators monitor participation and academic trends. These insights are used to tailor interventions for each school site, ensuring that programs are responsive to student need rather than one-size-fits-all. In addition to traditional metrics like ACT scores and GPA improvements, CAMP tracks engagement data, attendance, and social-emotional indicators to inform its practice.

One of the most impactful aspects of CAMP's approach is its emphasis on leveraging certified classroom teachers and community professionals to deliver instruction. These educators receive specialized training and support, equipping them to lead high-quality virtual and in-person sessions that blend academic rigor with cultural responsiveness. For example, during Saturday ACT Academies in Selma, Alabama, teachers are trained to embed test-taking strategies into core subject instruction, while also receiving real-time student performance data to adjust lesson pacing and focus. This model not only raises achievement—it empowers schools to build internal capacity for ongoing academic support.

CAMP's success also lies in its ability to manage logistics and communication across rural and urban districts. In places where students are spread out over large areas or lack reliable transportation, CAMP utilizes hybrid models that mix in-person instruction with virtual tutoring and college advising. For instance, in Greene County and Perry County, CAMP supplements school-based programming with evening Zoom tutoring and career workshops, ensuring continuity for students who may otherwise face barriers to consistent access.

At the heart of these efforts are the strategic partnerships that CAMP and its collaborators have built across the P-20 pipeline. Relationships with postsecondary institutions—like Alabama State University, and the University of South Carolina—create pipelines for admissions, mentorships, and scholarship opportunities. Local nonprofits and chambers of commerce serve as career exploration partners, hosting site visits, mock interviews, and job shadowing experiences. These connections are not just peripheral supports—they are embedded in the design and delivery of programming.

This session directly aligns with MSERA's 2025 theme, *"Cultivating a Community of Lifelong Researchers,"* by demonstrating how professional learning networks, shared inquiry, and collective impact can transform fragmented efforts into cohesive, student-centered systems. The programs represented in this symposium do not operate in isolation. Instead, they actively reflect on data, evaluate outcomes, and share lessons across districts and states to fuel a collective mission of educational excellence. Whether through formal evaluation reports or informal feedback loops with site leaders and families, the spirit of continuous learning guides their work.

Participants in this session will benefit from an honest conversation about what worked, what didn't, and what lessons can be adapted to their local contexts. The presenters will share their approaches to targeted strategies that can be implemented within a single semester to address urgent needs or pilot innovative ideas. They'll also explore communication frameworks that keep multiple stakeholders aligned, even when spread across hundreds of miles.

Audience engagement will be a central part of this session. Attendees will be invited to reflect on their own organizational challenges and work in small groups to draft scalable strategies for their own institutions.

Whether attendees are district administrators, researchers, or nonprofit leaders, this symposium will offer practical and research-informed strategies for improving student outcomes in even the most geographically challenging contexts.

Together, GEAR UP South Carolina, GEAR UP Arkansas, and CAMP will showcase how collaboration—backed by data, driven by equity, and grounded in shared purpose—can truly bridge the miles and build a community of lifelong learners and research-based strategies.

Keynote Q & A

14:00 - 14:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
Mindy Waldrop

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Professional Development, Instruction/Teaching & learning

14:00 - 14:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Earlisha Whitfield

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222 Collaborative Impact: A Professor in Practice and Teacher's Transformative Journey in Building Teacher Efficacy

Dr. Earlisha Whitfield[1], Ms. Lisa Taylor[2]

[1]University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL, USA. [2]Eccleston Elementary School, Orlando, FL, USA

Abstract

Collaborative Impact: A Professor in Practice and Teacher's Transformative Journey in Building Teacher Efficacy

This research study delves into the transformative journey of a Professor in Practice and Teacher Leader detailing a self-study that illuminates their significant work together of building trust and fostering teacher capacity within a public elementary Community School. By bridging the gap between theory and practical application, this work offers a unique perspective on how a university-based expert can directly impact the daily realities of K-12 education, ultimately enhancing teacher instructional quality and student outcomes.

This self-study examines the development and impact of a "Professor in Practice" model designed to build teacher capacity and develop trust within a public elementary Community School. This study outlines the approach taken by a Professor in Practice, an Assistant Professor of Reading Education, in her role at Eccleston Elementary Community School. The research will also detail the experiences of a Teacher Leader during this process.

Conceptual Framework: The professional development initiative is based on a self-efficacy framework, rooted in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1977). This framework- *Self Efficacy Framework for Professional Development* that a teacher's belief in their ability to succeed directly influences their teaching effectiveness and openness to new strategies. The professional development model focuses on four key sources of self-efficacy: ***Mastery Experiences****,* ***Vicarious Experiences****,* ***Social Persuasion****,* ***Physiological and Affective States.*** By integrating these elements, the program strives to cultivate self-efficacy in teachers, empowering them to take leadership roles, improve literacy instruction, and enhance student outcomes. This framework acknowledges that professional growth involves not only acquiring new knowledge and skills but also developing the belief in one's ability to effectively use them.

Methods: The methodology employs a qualitative thematic analysis of personal field notes, meeting minutes from professional development (PD) sessions and PD materials. The study will detail how self efficacy was developed in these roles through initial trust-building, consistent on-site presence, demonstrating instructional expertise, and adopting a peer-like relationship. A priori codes will be used to identify key themes emerging from the Self Efficacy Framework for Professional Development.

Findings and Discussions: Preliminary results indicate observable improvements in classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, student literacy scores in directly supported classrooms, and increased teacher-to-teacher collaboration.

Emerging data reveals several themes, trends, and intersections, highlighting both successes and challenges. These include time constraints, initial teacher reluctance to embrace leadership roles, the effectiveness of peer coaching, and the importance of building upon teacher strengths.

Future Practice and Research: Future work and research will focus on strengthening instructional leadership among grade-level team leads, moving beyond information dissemination. This will involve the continued implementation of active engagement strategies in classrooms and the expansion of new literacy initiatives, including the "Lit Lab" and an in-school book club.

Reflections on the personal and professional fulfillment derived from this hands-on engagement and the potential for future research and scaling this model to other educational settings.

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37 Teacher Engagement in Teaching their Students About Disinformation

Dr. Louis Nadelson

University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

There is an expanding presence of misinformation and disinformation. Furthermore, there is a high likelihood that students are exposed to misinformation and disinformation through their engagement with various electronic media, particularly social media. There is a potential for developing and holding detrimental misconceptions due to engagement with misinformation and disinformation. Teachers are well-positioned to identify and address the misconceptions their students hold. Teaching students about recognizing misinformation and disinformation has become even more critical with the growing access to and use of generative artificial intelligence tools for teaching and learning. These tools rely on existing media, which may include misinformation and disinformation, that can be used to generate seemingly accurate responses to prompts. However, if the responses are based on false information, the resulting output is likely to be inherently flawed. Thus, there is justification for examining how teachers are teaching their students to identify and process misinformation and disinformation. I have gathered survey data from over 100 K-12 teachers, detailing how they teach their students to identify and process misinformation and disinformation. In my presentation, I will share the outcomes of my quantitative and qualitative data analysis and discuss the implications of my findings.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Accountability

15:00 - 15:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Jane Nell Luster

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233 50 Years of IDEA: Does Access Equate to Improved Results?

Dr. Jane Nell Luster[1], Dr. Crystal London[2], Dr. Mindy Waldrop[3]

[1]Com-Link, LLC, Baton Rouge, LA, USA. [2]London BridgED, LLC, Baton Rouge, LA, USA. [3]Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY, USA

Abstract

Much of the impetus for the Education of All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975 was on ensuring children and youth with disabilities access to a free appropriate public education, essentially getting all students with disabilities into school. The act stated: "all public schools should provide all students with a free appropriate public education at public expense, without additional charges to parents or students, and must be under public supervision, as well as appropriate for the child's needs" (EHA, 1975). According to a report produced by Ed.gov, on the history of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), "The U.S. has progressed from excluding nearly 1.8 million children with disabilities from public schools prior to EHA implementation to providing more than 8 million children with disabilities with special education and related services designed to meet their individual needs in the 2022-23 school year" (2024). Indicating that students with disabilities were able to achieve access to education, largely due to the federal legislation.

Twenty years ago, when the IDEA was most recently reauthorized, states were required to focus state monitoring activities on – "improving educational results and functional outcomes for all children with disabilities and ensuring that public agencies meet the program requirements…with a particular emphasis on those requirements that are most closely related to improving educational results for children with disabilities" (IDEA, 2004). These two points of emphasis, access and results, are the focus of this exploratory study as we seek to determine if access alone has been and is sufficient for students with disabilities to achieve improved results? We can agree students with disabilities have access to attend public schools. Yet, are we seeing improved results for all students?

IDEA 2004 requires the US Department of Education (US DOE) to determine the extent to which states meet the purposes and requirements of IDEA. To make these determinations, the US DOE scores states on indicators of results and compliance. For this exploratory study, the authors selected states with a "meets requirements" determination for more than six consecutive years to determine the extent to which

students with disabilities are included in general education classes and achieving the outcomes of education through measures of proficiency on state assessments and graduating from high school with a regular high school diploma. These states are contrasted with states with determinations of “needs assistance” in meeting the requirements for more than six consecutive years The authors will use analysis of variance to assess (1) the extent of inclusion and (2) education outcomes for students with disabilities between the “Meets Requirements” and States not categorized as “Meets Requirements” groups. The authors hypothesize the differences will be related to the US DOE method of scoring to make the determinations rather than practical differences in inclusion and proficiency.

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160 Demographic Influences on School Accountability in Arkansas: A Multi-Year Linear Regression Study of ESSA Performance Scores

Dr. Michael Mills, Dr. Debbie Dailey, Dr. Donna Wake

University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

Problem Statement: Educational accountability systems like the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) have been scrutinized for potentially exacerbating educational inequities among schools, particularly affecting those serving high percentages of low-income students and students of color. This study addresses the critical question of whether the demographic composition of schools in Arkansas influences their ESSA accountability scores, potentially reflecting or reinforcing existing inequalities rather than purely school performance.

Theoretical Grounding: Drawing on the history of educational accountability in the United States, the study explores the evolution from early informal community oversight to the current high-stakes standardized testing regime. It highlights the intentions behind ESSA to promote equity and the challenges inherent in achieving this goal given the socio-economic and racial disparities within the education system.

Methodology: Utilizing a multi-year linear regression analysis of publicly accessible data from Arkansas schools, this study examines the relationship between school demographics (including race and socio-economic status) and ESSA scores across three academic years. The analysis focuses on identifying predictive variables that significantly correlate with ESSA scores, aiming to disentangle the influence of demographic factors from the assessment of school performance. It is important to note that during the study period, Arkansas transitioned from the ACT Aspire testing system to the Atlas assessments as the primary state testing model, which may have

implications for the consistency and comparability of accountability measures across the analyzed years.

Results: The findings reveal a strong and statistically significant correlation between certain demographic variables and ESSA scores, with low-income and Black students negatively correlated, and White and Asian students positively correlated with ESSA scores. These relationships account for a significant proportion of the variance in ESSA scores, suggesting that demographics are a potent predictor of school accountability ratings.

Conclusions/Implications: The study concludes that the current ESSA scoring mechanism in Arkansas may not adequately reflect the quality of education provided by schools, as scores are significantly influenced by student demographics. This raises concerns about the fairness and efficacy of using such scores for high-stakes decisions. The transition from ACT Aspire to Atlas testing adds an additional layer of complexity to the interpretation of accountability scores and their comparability over time. The study calls for a reassessment of accountability metrics to ensure they more accurately represent school performance without penalizing schools for factors beyond their control. It emphasizes the need for policies that address the root causes of educational disparities, suggesting a move towards a more inclusive and representative educational assessment system that accounts for testing transitions and their potential impacts on school evaluations.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Learner Support, Research, Adult Education

15:00 - 15:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Amany Saleh

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80 Perceptions of Arkansas School Leaders of their Knowledge and Training Regarding Homeless Students Education

Dr. Amany Saleh[1], Dr. Judy Holaway[2], Dr. Camile Sterrett[3]

[1]Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR, USA. [2]Southern Arkansas University, Magnolia, AR, USA. [3]Dumas School District, Dumas, AR, USA

Abstract

The U.S. Department of Education recorded a historic high for the homeless count for the nation’s public-school children which is more than 1.2 million (National Center for

Homeless Education (NCHE), 2023). Roughly 4.2 million children experience homelessness each year (NCSL, 2025). Each year the number of homeless students whose families lose their homes increases (Covert, 2025). This study examined school administrators' perceptions of their knowledge, training they received and services and resources offered by the school to prepare them to meet the needs of homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Research Questions

1. What are school leaders' perceptions of their knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act?
2. What type of training have school leaders received to work with homeless children, youth and families?
3. Do school leaders perceive that they have the services and resources required to meet the needs of homeless children, youth and families?

Method of Inquiry

The study utilized a quantitative methodology, collecting data through a survey sent to school leaders in Arkansas. The survey included questions about demographics, knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Act, training received, and services provided to homeless students.

Findings

The study results can be summarized as follows:

1. **Knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**:

A significant number of school leaders were knowledgeable about the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act. For instance, 88.63% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that they know the different definitions of homelessness, 92.04% knew the general requirements of the Act, and 85.23% were aware of the transportation requirements for homeless students.

1. **Training Received**:

Many school leaders felt they needed more training to better serve homeless students. About 66percent of participants indicated that they would like to receive training on the McKinney-Vento Act.

1. **Services and Resources**:

A large majority (69.62%) of participants believed that homeless students have the tools and resources to be successful in academic and extracurricular activities. However, only

58.22% believed that their school received enough resources to address homeless students' needs.

1. **Collaboration and Communication**:

Less than half (45.57%) of participants indicated they collaborate with local businesses and industries to provide enrichment experiences for homeless students.

1. **Challenges**:

Participants identified several hurdles in addressing homeless students' needs, including collaboration and communication with parents, identification of homeless students, and transportation.

Conclusion and Significance of the Study

The findings clearly demonstrate that Arkansas school leaders were still in need of training to better service homeless students. Training would allow all stakeholders to identify their roles and responsibilities when working with homeless students. School leaders providing training for teachers emphasizing social justice education would ensure homeless students are provided equal opportunities and accessibility to resources in education to eliminate barriers hindering academic success. Social justice education training would provide an opportunity for school leaders to advocate for underserved populations of homeless students.

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196 Advancing Careers and Academic Success: Storying a Partnership in Education and Healthcare

Dr. Shea Kuykendoll

University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

In today’s complex and demanding healthcare environments, supporting employee advancement requires more than tuition assistance; it demands care, understanding, and partnerships rooted in mutual growth. This presentation will showcase the innovative collaboration between University of Memphis Global (UofM Global) and a major healthcare corporation designed to transform employee development through a tuition benefit program.

The tuition benefit program provides employees with the opportunity to pursue higher education without the financial strain typically associated with tuition costs. By removing this barrier, the partnership fosters a culture of continuous learning, professional growth, and personal development. Employees are empowered to advance their academic and career goals while balancing their work and personal responsibilities. This not only supports individual advancement but also contributes to greater job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement within the workplace.

This partnership goes beyond tuition assistance by embedding a student advocate model—a dedicated role that provides one-on-one guidance to participating employees from inquiry to graduation. The student advocate becomes a trusted advocate in the educational journey, helping employees navigate eligibility, enrollment, academic planning, and life's inevitable curveballs. The advocate listens, affirms, redirects, and celebrates, creating a relational ecosystem of support that has significantly increased program participation, persistence, and degree completion.

But the real innovation in this partnership is not just what was done, it's how we chose to understand it. Rather than relying solely on metrics like retention rates and graduation numbers (though these are important), equally important are the stories of the employees and their stories of regaining confidence, reimagining their careers, and feeling genuinely seen and supported, not just as workers, but as whole people.

To answer these questions, I used storytelling as a method to elicit the lived experiences of employee-learners navigating their academic journeys while managing careers in healthcare. My research approach of employees sharing personal stories of growth, struggle, and resilience in their own words offers rich insights into how they experience the program.

Through this method, the partnership moved beyond program delivery into reflective practice. Story became both data and dialogue, a way to learn, adapt, and center the lived experiences of those most impacted.

For the healthcare corporation, these stories will illuminate the deeper return on investment: not only did employee performance and retention improve, but so did morale, loyalty, and organizational culture. The partnership serves as a pipeline for developing not just more skilled employees, but more empowered individuals. This presentation invites attendees to listen deeply to these stories, to consider the implications of narrative-driven workforce development, and to explore how education and employment partnerships can become spaces of care, growth, and transformation when they prioritize human connection over transaction.

This session explores how an education-healthcare partnership transforms employee advancement into a process of lifelong inquiry. Using storytelling as a method, participants become co-researchers of their own experiences, creating a culture where learning, reflection, and data-driven growth are shaping not just careers but communities of practice.

55 Decreasing Medical Errors and Adverse Events by Implementing Interprofessional Education into Healthcare Higher Education Programs

Dr. Stephanie Whiddon, Dr. Christy Hornsby

Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches, La, USA

Abstract

Interprofessional education (IPE) is a collaborative learning approach that brings together students from different healthcare professions to enhance teamwork, communication, and mutual understanding, ultimately improving patient care. Defined as an experience in which two or more professions learn from, with, and about each other, IPE fosters essential competencies required for effective interprofessional collaboration. As healthcare systems evolve, the need for professionals trained in collaborative practice grows, making IPE an integral component of healthcare education. This study explores the impact of IPE on healthcare organizations and patient care, addressing key research questions regarding interdepartmental deficiencies, implementation strategies, and student perspectives. Utilizing a qualitative research approach, the study gathers insights from healthcare professionals to evaluate the feasibility of integrating IPE into curricula. The theoretical framework is grounded in Allport's Contact Theory, which supports direct interaction among diverse groups to reduce stereotypes and enhance teamwork. The significance of IPE lies in its potential to improve patient safety, reduce medical errors, and foster a culture of collaboration within healthcare settings. By equipping students with essential communication and teamwork skills before they enter the workforce, IPE contributes to better patient outcomes and organizational efficiency. This study aims to highlight the necessity of IPE and provide actionable recommendations for its broader implementation in healthcare education, ultimately promoting a more cohesive and effective healthcare system.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - College & Career Readiness, Action Research

15:00 - 15:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Sarah Salisbury

40 Building and Measuring Student STEM Identity: Strategies and Practices from the Field

Dr. Brenda Neuman-Sheldon, -- Michelle Stie-Buckles

National Math and Science Initiative, Dallas, TX, USA

Abstract

Thirty years ago, the National Math + Science Initiative (NMSI) was founded to help close the STEM performance gap for students and increase the STEM workforce pipeline. A key feature of this work is developing and implementing school leader and teacher professional development services that improves students' knowledge and skill in STEM disciplines, attitudes and experience in STEM, and routine access to STEM mentors, tools, and opportunities. These outcomes are important contributors to students' STEM Identity –the extent to which students are knowledgeable and literate in STEM, see STEM as valuable and useful, apply STEM practices to solve problems, and have family members, friends, role models, or mentors with jobs or training in STEM fields (Moote et al, 2020; Gordec et al, 2024).

In 2020, the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) began implementing a new strategy for measuring our program impact - *The Critical Reasoning for College Readiness Assessment (CR4CR)* that includes two components: 1) a discipline specific STEM readiness assessment aligned with Common Core, AP Content, and NAGB/EPIC research assessments of students' to algebraic, statistical and computational thinking, and 2) survey items to measure students' STEM engagement, efficacy, and belonging their engagement with STEM learning as well as their access to STEM tools mentors and opportunities. CR4CR was developed in partnership between the Berkeley Educational Assessment Research Center (BEAR) at the University of California, Berkeley and NMSI. Students in grades 6-12 taught by participating NMSI teachers complete CR4CR twice annually, providing student level data on student skill growth and changes in self-perception within a school year.

CR4CR has become an integral part of NMSI programming, providing concrete measurements of changes in student skills and mindsets, and a launchpad for prioritizing the development of K-12 educators' understanding of STEM Identity and their ability to improve students' STEM Identity as a remediation to patterns of inequity.

NMSI has taken valuable steps to ensure that the CR4CR assessment is part of teacher professional development arc and the data derived from the assessment is usable in the classroom. NMSI has further aligned the CR4CR construct outcomes to Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards while also aligning assessment data points to grade level proficiency. In addition, NMSI has taken steps to ensure CR4CR constructs and data points are aligned to NMSI resources allowing teachers to swiftly assess their data and create classroom experiences that address areas of intervention needs.

This session will delve into 1) the research about the reliability, validity, and results of CR4CR as a tool for measuring the impact of NMSI programming on student skills and mindsets; 2) the work of NMSI's internal Program Design Team to align the assessment to national and state standards as well as build connections to our programming to demonstrate the value of NMSI's strategy to inform instruction, identify student needs and measure progress; and 3) the value of this work to district partners in improving long term outcomes for their students.

King, G. P., Russo-Tait, T., & Andrews, T. C. (2023). Evading race: STEM faculty struggle to acknowledge racialized classroom events. CBE—Life Sciences Education. https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.22-06-0104

Moote, J., Archer, L., & DeWitt, J., & MacLeod, E. (2019). Who has high science capital? An exploration of emerging patterns of science capital among students aged 17/18 in England. Research Papers in Education. https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2019.1678062

Moote, J., Archer, L., & DeWitt, J., & MacLeod, E. (2020). Science capital or STEM capital? Exploring relationships between science capital and technology, engineering, and maths aspirations and attitudes among young people aged 17/18. Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 1(1), 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21628

Aschbacher, P. R., Li, E., & Roth, E. J. (2010). Is science me? High school students' identities, participation and aspirations in science, engineering, and medicine. Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 47(5), 564–582. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.20353

155 Student Self-Efficacy in Completing a Short-Term, Non-Credit, Job-Focused Training Program in Rural Central Louisiana

Dr. Mary Doney[1], Dr. Christy Hornsby[2]

[1]Northwestern State Univeristy, Natchitoches, La, USA. [2]Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, La, USA

Abstract

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore students' sense of self- efficacy on attaining an industry-based credential from a rural community college after completing a short-term, non-credit, job-focused training program. The overarching research question was, what component of the College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (CASES) was most influential and least influential for completers of a short-term, non- credit, job-focused training program leading to an industry-recognized credential from a community college located in central Louisiana? Bandura's social cognitive theory of self-efficacy, which focuses on a person's belief in their ability to influence the events in their life and

succeed in specific situations, served as the theoretical framework for the study. Purposive sampling was used to select students who had successfully completed a short-term, non-credit program at a community college in rural central Louisiana that led to an industry-based certification. The population for the study was 303 students, with a research sample of 34 students. The 3 programs studied were: Commercial Vehicle Operator (CVO), Nurse Assistant (NA), and Welding Technology. The study site was a small, predominately rural public community college in central Louisiana with five campus locations. Data were collected using the College Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (CASES) survey. Using the non-parametric Friedman test with post-hoc analysis, the data were analyzed to better determine the relationship between program completers and self- efficacy, and to understand if 2 of the CASES self-efficacy subscales, cognitive operations and technical skills, influenced student success in the programs. The resulting data indicated that although cognitive operations did have an impact on program completion, after post-hoc analysis, no significant differences were evident. Significant differences were noted between the technical skills component and Nurse Assistant completion, specifically in 2 items: computer usage and effective studying.

Discussion/Paper Roundtable

15:00 - 15:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Presentation type Discussion/Paper (Roundtable)
Keicia Hawkins

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54 An Exploration of Literature on the Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Imposter Phenomenon in Educators and Doctoral Students

Dr. Christy Hornsby, Dr. Laura Norman, Dr. April Giddens

Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches, LA, USA

Abstract

Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to complete a specific task with skill and effectiveness in a certain field or context (Bandura, 1995). Through time, Bandura divided self-efficacy into four principal sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states. Mastery experiences, known as the most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy, are those experiences best defined as successes versus failures. In other words, success builds efficacy whereas failures undermine it (Bandura, 1997). Vicarious experiences are provided by social models. Bandura (1995) expounds that

a person often looks to those around them in social circles and when tasks are completed successfully, it provides encouragement and reassurance that the task can be completed successfully resulting in a higher efficacious person. Verbal persuasion is persuasion of one's capabilities to produce self-efficacy and persistence in completing tasks, especially in adverse circumstances. Bandura (1997) explains that people who were persuaded verbally to accomplish a task are likely to extend greater effort than if the individual had self-doubts and only dwelled on personal deficiencies. Psychological states, such as mood, can impact an individual's self-efficacy as positive moods promote self-efficacy and negative moods will decrease efficacy (Bandura, 1995).

Imposter Phenomenon (IP) was originally described as an internal experience of intellectual phoniness which involves the belief that one is not capable or bright enough to complete a task and has fooled anyone who thinks otherwise (Clane & Imes, 1978). This phenomenon originally was found in women of high educational attainment and career paths but eventually has become broader scaled in the field of research and academia; now known as Imposter Syndrome (1978). Clance (1985) explained that six characteristics can distinguish the Imposter Phenomenon, or Imposter Syndrome, and an individual will experience at least two of the following: the imposter cycle, the need to be special or the best of, characteristics of superman/superwoman, fear of failure, denial of ability and discounting praise, and feeling fear and guilt about success. Clance and Imes have promoted the idea that imposter syndrome is an experience, not a mental disorder.

The perceptions of one's abilities can be directly impacted by an individual's level of self-efficacy (Langford & Clance, 1993). Individuals who perceive themselves as imposters often mistrust their skills and abilities and will often give credit to external factors rather than ability (Langford & Clance, 1993). The relationship is clear and evident through Chrisman et al.'s (1995) study by finding individuals who have feelings of imposter syndrome also have lower levels of self-efficacy. Therefore, this session will explore research literature on the relationship between Imposter Phenomenon (IP) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995; Clance & Imes, 1978), specifically for educators and doctoral students.

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114 Perceptions of Preparedness: Teacher Candidates and Trauma-Informed Classroom Management

Dr. Everett Singleton, Dr. Donald Snead

Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN, USA

Abstract

Each year, approximately 46 million children in the United States encounter some form of psychological trauma, including exposure to violence, crime, abuse, homelessness, or food insecurity. Beyond these, children also face a variety of other distressing events that can lead to psychological trauma. In a clinical model of teacher preparation, teacher candidates spend significant time in classrooms. This sustained exposure means they will inevitably encounter students who have experienced trauma, underscoring the critical need for educators to be prepared to support these learners effectively. Educators must be ready to assist students impacted by trauma.

This research, approved by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB), aimed to explore teacher candidates' perceptions and understanding of student trauma, as well as their preparedness to respond to students affected by it. Data was collected from 45 college students over the age of 17 who were enrolled in the YOED Classroom Management course. The study utilized two qualitative surveys and a discussion protocol to gather information on their experiences, discussions, and feedback.

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132 Reading, Reflecting, and Refining: A Duoethnography on Developing Feedback Practices for Doctoral Students

Dr. Jess Smith[1], Dr. Ryann N. Shelton[2]

[1]Bellarmine University, Louisville, KY, USA. [2]Baylor University, Waco, TX, USA

Abstract

Advising doctoral students for the first time presents a range of challenges, particularly in situations where faculty receive little formal preparation for this complex and high-stakes responsibility. In contemporary educational spaces, the ability to provide meaningful, actionable feedback to doctoral students stands as a critical but underexplored component of faculty development. Early career faculty charged with advising doctoral students or serving on their committees often have limited experiences outside of their own dissertation experience and tend to draw heavily on those personal narratives when beginning to mentor doctoral students. This presentation shares findings from a duoethnographic study in which two early-career faculty members critically examined how their approaches to giving feedback on doctoral student writing developed over time. Through the methodology of duoethnography (Sawyer & Norris, 2013), which emphasizes dialogic reflection and co-construction of knowledge, the study centers the lived experiences of the authors as we engaged in cycles of self-study, collaborative journaling, and reflexive dialogue.

We used the method of currere (Pinar, 1975) to look back on our earlier experiences giving feedback, analyze our current practices, and reconceptualize future approaches.

Data collection included autobiographical timelines, polyvocal journaling, and recorded Zoom conversations on feedback-related topics, including iterative feedback, reciprocal advising, and growing doctoral-level writers. We explored how our feedback practices have shifted from suggestive to prescriptive over time and how our previous roles as K–12 teachers and instructional coaches shaped our perceptions of effective support. Findings highlight the nuanced tension between asking open-ended questions and offering direct, prescriptive guidance, a tension that is especially complex when mentoring students navigating the liminal space of dissertation writing.

Through the lens of dialogic inquiry and reflexive practice, this study surfaces how the affective dimensions of feedback, such as relational trust, vulnerability, and empathy, interact with the technical aspects of dissertation advising. We found that our growth in providing feedback has been significantly supported by collaboration, shared committee work, and transparent conversation about advising practices. By inviting feedback from one another and modeling co-constructed learning, we demonstrate how early-career faculty can cultivate a feedback mindset that prioritizes both student growth and faculty development.

This study informs faculty mentors supporting both student writers and PhD candidates who will supervise doctoral writing in their future careers. It calls for the development of intentional structures for mentor training, feedback modeling, and collaborative advising. We argue that providing feedback is not merely a skill to be acquired, but a scholarly practice informed by research, reflection, and reciprocal professional growth. In cultivating a community of lifelong researchers, we must also cultivate communities of faculty learners—educators who see feedback as both an art and a responsibility.

This presentation aligns with MSERA's 2025 theme by contributing to our collective understanding of how educators become researchers of their own practice, particularly in the realm of dissertation advising. Our duoethnographic inquiry affirms that reflecting on the relational and recursive nature of feedback can deepen our understanding of scholarly mentorship and improve educational outcomes for doctoral students.

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59 Understanding Principal Influence: A Descriptive-Embedded Case Study of The Attributes of Path-Goal Style of Leadership and Its Influence on Principal's Decision-Making in Response to School Performance Scores.

Dr. Joshua Sims[1], Dr. Patsy Hughey[2]

[1]Logansport High School, Logansport, La, USA. [2]La Tech University, Ruston, La, USA

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how Path-Goal leadership styles impact the decision-making process of school principals in response to school performance scores.

Using purposive sampling, the researcher selected participants from public high schools in the Northwest Southern region for inclusion in a descriptive-embedded case study, specifically focusing on principals and their instructional leaders. The data collection process encompassed various sources, such as field observations, state-released test data, and semi-structured one-on-one interviews with principals and instructional leaders.

The theoretical framework underpinning this study was the Path-Goal theory of leadership, which posits four distinct leadership styles: Directive, Supportive, Participative, and Achievement-Oriented. The study revealed that while principals consistently exhibited a specific Path-Goal leadership style, they demonstrated flexibility in employing all four styles as needed. Furthermore, the alignment between a principal's self-perception of their leadership style, their actual style, and the perceptions of their instructional leaders was consistently observed in practice. This research study underscores the importance of a leader's influence on followers. It emphasizes the need for leaders to cultivate adaptability in their leadership styles while making decisions that enhance school performance scores effectively.

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105 A High Leverage Principal Data Literacy Action: Leading through Questioning

Dr. Jennifer Mueller[1], Dr. Andrew Pendola[2]

[1]Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA. [2]Auburn University, Auburn, Al, USA

Abstract

In a recent convergent mixed-methods with thematic analysis dissertation research project, principal data literacy actions that influence the frequency, depth, and purpose of teacher data-driven decision-making were identified. The study took place in rural, high-need schools, and the results highlighted principal data literacy actions that led to impactful teacher practices and contributed to improved student achievement. There were three identified categories of principal data literacy actions: accountability, support, and modeling actions. Each category was comprised of specific actions that principals routinely complete, which influence the way teachers feel, view, and use student data for instructional planning.

One principal action was found to span all three categories and proved to impact not only teacher practices but also student experiences, resulting in teacher collective self-efficacy, student ownership, and self-advocacy. The dynamic action of supportive questioning was evident throughout each level of teacher and student experiences. Inquiry actions were seen as part of the modeling actions as they include other principal skills that lead to knowing what to ask and how to monitor the students' progress over time. The complete set of actions includes closely tracking individual student data, identifying trends in the data, providing state-level updates that are connected to the

data, asking targeted questions about student growth and instruction, initiating conversations with all stakeholders about student needs, and modeling the data analysis process.

While the actions themselves are not groundbreaking, the approach of these successful principals has always been centered on supporting teachers, promoting student growth, and serving as a collaborative partner for the success of all. The relational approach of the principals in presenting their expectations and holding teachers to a professional high bar of accountability for student growth inspired and motivated teachers to implement intentional best practices that were student-centered, resulting in improved student achievement. *A High Leverage Principal Data Literacy Action: Leading through Questioning* provides the study findings and practical applications that all principals can use to support teacher data-driven decision-making for instructional planning.

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15 Student Perceptions of Employability and the Value of Utilization of Career Services in a Community College Setting

Ms. Toni Celestine, Dr. Laura Norman

Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches, LA, USA

Abstract

Higher education institutions are functioning in a highly competitive and dynamic job market. They are at the forefront of developing graduate programs that can adapt to the market's changing needs and aim to produce graduates ready to enter the workforce immediately (Osmani et al., 2019). Institutions of higher education are increasingly prioritizing the employability skills of their graduates due to industry concerns and stakeholder pressures (Paterson, 2017). Focusing on community colleges, these institutions provide short-term, two-year, and technical programs in many communities which create many positions within the workforce. Additionally, community colleges provide certificates and associate degrees for disadvantaged workers and high school graduations (Holzer, 2015). Adult learners participate in formal education to gain knowledge and skills that will lead to gainful employment and a better quality of life. The Career Services Center is responsible for providing students with professional development assistance and employment opportunities. Career Services bridge a connection between college graduates, employment opportunities, and career readiness (Smith, 2020).

As employers voice concerns about graduates having the skills, knowledge, and desirable work ethic, career service centers are playing a role in career preparation. If

intentional engagement with these students is not a priority, this can contribute to a workforce lacking some of the key professional skills that employers desire. Career Service centers at community colleges offer many opportunities for students to gain the desired soft skills. Industry and graduates expect colleges to ensure students have the knowledge and skills to succeed in the workforce. With the gap between expected and actual skillsets, there is a need to understand how students' perceptions of employability (Ho et al., 2022) affect students' engagement and utilization of the services provided by the department in a community college setting.

Employers invest time and resources into onboarding new hires with the expectation of a return on their investment. When employers must sever ties with new hires due to time management, conflict resolution, or other workplace readiness skills, industry partners question the colleges' commitment to producing graduates ready for the global workforce. This session will discuss workplace readiness (Gonzales, 2017), career development and employability (Ho et al., 2022), perceived employability (Osmani et al, 2019), and community college workforce and career services (Smith, 2020) regarding the current labor market. Additionally, this session will discuss results found through a quantitative approach of student's perceptions of employability in the labor market and how the utilization of Career Services did impact or did not impact the students enrolled in three programs in a Louisiana Community College by answering the following research questions which guided this study:

1A**.** Does student perception of employability affect the utilization of Career Services for students enrolled in a welding cohort?

1B. Does student perception of employability affect the utilization of Career Services for students enrolled in an electrician cohort?

1C. Does student perception of employability affect the utilization of Career Services for students enrolled in a medical lab science cohort?

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93 From Curiosity to Career: How Immersive GEAR UP Camp Experiences Shape Middle Schoolers' Aspirations

Ms. Sheila Gamero, Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim

Arkansas Tech University, Russellville, AR, USA

Abstract

This roundtable presentation examines how immersive, structured learning experiences during a weeklong GEAR UP summer camp shaped the career aspirations and self-perceptions of 6th and 7th grade participants. Utilizing a mixed-method research design, the study analyzed pre- and post-camp survey responses and daily written reflections from seventy middle school students attending the GEAR UP federally funded summer program in Arkansas. The camp was designed to expose students to a range of high-interest, high-demand fields through interactive and hands-on activities, including CPR certification, environmental fieldwork, drone piloting, and emergency preparedness training. Students engaged directly with tools, technologies, and professionals from the medical, technological, environmental, and public safety sectors.

The research aimed to investigate how such structured exposure influences students' emerging sense of career direction, self-efficacy, and engagement with future possibilities. The pre- and post-surveys included fixed-response and open-ended questions to capture both quantitative change and qualitative changes in student perspectives. Reflections were analyzed thematically to track evolving attitudes, interests, and levels of confidence. Findings indicated a shift from general or vague responses in the pre-survey, such as wanting "to help people" or "learn about science", to more focused and articulated goals in the post-survey, including aspirations to become pediatric nurses, emergency managers, aquatic researchers, and app developers.

Students' reflections revealed increased interest in collaborative roles, technological tools, and leadership capacities, with many expressing a new awareness of the variety of career paths available in science, technology, and emergency services. Confidence gains were also measurable. Students reported growth in both skill areas and mindset, with specific mentions of their ability to complete tasks like CPR, stretcher assembly, or drone navigation. These experiences, reinforced through structured reflection, appeared to promote students' understanding of career-relevant knowledge and a belief in their capacity to pursue complex roles.

The significance of the study lies in its demonstration of how scaffolded, short-term educational interventions can produce meaningful changes in middle school students' career orientation. By using both qualitative and quantitative tools, the study offers a replicable model for integrating career readiness into early adolescence. The findings contribute to the broader effort of making career exploration more intentional, equitable, and developmentally aligned. For practitioners and policymakers, the study reinforces the importance of immersive learning and reflective practice in supporting youth as emerging decision-makers. Aligned with MSERA's mission to support research-based innovation in education, this project confirms that middle school students are capable of envisioning their futures more clearly when given real-world tools, authentic experiences, and space to reflect on their learning in meaningful ways.

216 Advisor-Student Relationship and Caseload Size

Ms. Denise Seyl, Dr. Donald Snead

Middle Tennessee State Univesity, Murfreesboro, TN, USA

Abstract

Higher Educational institutions funding is no longer based on how many students are enrolled but on how many students they are keeping. Due to this shift in funding, there is a major shift for ways to increase the retention and graduation rates for funding. To focus on retention and graduation rates, institutions have employed academic advisors to act as a connection between students and their institutions. Academic advising has become the link to retention and graduation rates; therefore, the quality of advising must be examined. Several researchers (Hawthorne, et al., 2022; Sanders & Killion, 2017) suggest that the size of caseloads affects the quality of advising capabilities.

The purpose of this study was to gain perspective through advisors at a four-year public higher education institution about advising. While this study explored the types of advising exercised, the primary focus was how the size of an advising caseload impacted the advising approach, quality and connections with students.

The research design was qualitative with a phenomenological framework that focuses on understanding how individuals experienced a particular phenomenon (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). Participants in this study were volunteers recruited through email invitations to complete a Qualtrics survey. The survey was available to volunteers for four weeks with a reminder email sent at the end of the second week. The anticipated sample size was five to eight participants; but 18 volunteers responded to the survey. The data analysis followed the process described by Creswell and Poth (2018).

Three research questions were developed to guide this study, and themes emerged for each question during the data analysis. The first question sought to explore the perceptions of academic advisors regarding their connections with students. The second question explored the advisors' perceptions of how the caseload size impacted the connections with students. The third question sought to discover common or shared solutions to policy or practices regarding caseload size in academic advising.

In response to question one, the data showed that relationship building is foundational for academic advising. Several participants indicated that academic advisors perform multiple roles to student success. One student wrote that she felt like a "life coach, a mentor, a mother figure, a confidant, a recruiter, a salesperson, and a constant source of support." Relationship building was a common theme that emerged from the data. In response to the second question about caseload size, participants consistently reported that smaller caseloads foster strong and meaningful relationships with students. Caseload size was not defined numerically, but in terms of manageability

which allowed them to build strong relationships with students. In response to the third question, six themes surfaced as it relates to institutional policies related to the size of caseloads. Most of the advisors cited an ideal caseload ranging between 150 to 175 students.

This study found that excessive caseloads significantly hinder the quality of advisor-student relationships. When caseloads were reported manageable, advisors expressed greater satisfaction and a stronger ability to engage with students.

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99 What's Next and Why: African American Female High School Seniors' Descriptions of Educational Experiences That Influence Their Decisions About Their Futures

Dr. Sherita Williams[1], Dr. Lisa Beckham[2]

[1]Greystone Elementary, Hoover, Alabama, USA. [2]Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, USA

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study was to determine how the educational experiences of African American female high school seniors influence their plans for their futures. African American female students face a unique set of challenges based on race and gender in their educational experiences. A review of the literature revealed gaps in achievement, disparities in discipline, and disconnectedness in relationships with peers and adults. More research exists on exploring other subgroups of students, comparison of female students of all races, and comparison research on African American students. However, little research has investigated the intersectionality of being African American and female. Research has not thoroughly explored how these factors - gaps in achievement, disparities in discipline, and disconnectedness in relationships with peers and adults - coincide with race and gender to impact the futures of African American female students.

The researcher used critical race feminism as the overarching theoretical framework with an emphasis on the intersectionality of gender and race. Through purposive and convenience sampling, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with seven African American female high school seniors from two affluent high schools and two low socioeconomic status high schools in the southeastern United States. This research study was guided by the following research question: “How do African American female high school seniors describe their educational experiences that have influenced their decisions about their futures?” The seven high school seniors were asked about their educational experiences from elementary school through high school involving

academics, discipline, and relationships, as well as their hopes and plans for their futures.

The data were analyzed using verbatim transcriptions, open coding, reviewing memos, and thematic analysis. Three themes emerged from the research: (1) Teacher and peer relationships and interactions play a critical role in the formation of future aspirations and academic choices among African American female students; (2) School culture profoundly impacts African American female students' participation and sense of belonging within a school, including recognition of differences and the potential for the invisibility of their interest and concerns; (3) Support systems that promote agency, knowingly or unknowingly, allow African American female students to build resilience and make self-determined decisions about their futures. This study is significant because it identified factors that influence the academic success of African American female students and can inform educators and other stakeholders in making culturally relevant educational decisions that impact academic success for African American females.

Recommendations for future research include conducting studies with a larger sample size of African American female high school seniors, conducting comparative studies with African American females and other marginalized groups of female students, and extending the study to conduct follow-up interviews with the same participants after a predetermined time after high school graduation.

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136 The Care That Carried Us: Othermothering and Black Male Persistence at an HBCU

Dr. Terrance Pryor

University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

This qualitative study explores the role of Othermothering in fostering persistence among Black male students at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) in the southern United States. Grounded in African American Male Theory (AAMT), the research draws on the lived experiences of six Black male graduates who recounted the transformative impact of Black women faculty, staff, and administrators. These "Othermothers" provided far more than academic support; they offered emotional, cultural, and spiritual care that affirmed identity, cultivated belonging, and anchored persistence. Functioning as institutional agents, they guided, corrected, protected, and created access to opportunities students may not have otherwise encountered.

Through narrative analysis, the study highlights how Othermothering bridged institutional gaps, offering a culturally grounded model of relational labor that challenges conventional student success paradigms. In a higher education landscape obsessed with metrics, this work urges the field to look beyond GPA and retention rates. It argues that Othermothering is not simply a cultural phenomenon but a form of resistance and equity-driven practice that demands institutional recognition and replication.

These findings contribute to a growing body of literature calling for higher education institutions to move from performative equity to transformative belonging. By centering the often-invisible labor of Othermothers, this study repositions care, connection, and cultural alignment as essential pillars of Black male student success and institutional responsibility.

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181 Advancing Health Equity in Chronic Kidney Disease: Changing the Narrative to Serve Mississippi'sMost Equitable Population

Dr. Brieah Hudson[1], Dr. James Robinson[1], Ms. Vicki Mcintosh[2]

[1]Jackson State University, jackson, MS, USA. [2]MS Kidney Foundation, Canton, MS, USA

Abstract

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) affects approximately 37 million American adults, with one in three adults at risk. In 2023, over 808,000 Americans live with kidney failure, and more than half a million require dialysis. Despite the urgent need, fewer than 3% of newly diagnosed patients receive preemptive kidney transplants due to donor shortages. CKD ranks as the ninth leading cause of death in the United States and remains underdiagnosed, as early stages are largely asymptomatic. Diabetes and hypertension are the primary contributors, accounting for nearly half of new kidney disease cases.

Racial and ethnic disparities in CKD are profound: Black/African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans face significantly higher risks of developing kidney failure compared to White Americans. In Mississippi, these disparities are exacerbated by socioeconomic factors, with older Black adults of lower income and education disproportionately affected.

CKD develops gradually, with declining kidney function leading to serious health complications including anemia, cardiovascular disease, and eventual kidney failure requiring dialysis or transplant. Awareness of CKD remains low; 40% of those with advanced kidney damage are unaware of their condition. The financial burden is substantial, with Medicare spending over $87 billion annually on CKD and kidney failure treatments.

Social determinants of health—such as food insecurity, housing instability, limited transportation, poor education, and environmental exposures—drive disparities in CKD prevalence and outcomes, especially among marginalized populations. These factors contribute to high rates of hypertension, diabetes, and stress, which directly increase CKD risk.

Addressing CKD in Mississippi necessitates a multifaceted approach combining early detection, education, community engagement, and policy change. Since 2022, an interdisciplinary collaboration involving Jackson State University, the Mississippi State Department of Health, the Mississippi Kidney Foundation, and the Health Equity Coalition of Mississippi has implemented initiatives targeting CKD prevention and management. Key interventions include nutrition counseling and physical activity programs for elementary students, public awareness campaigns utilizing multimedia platforms, community support groups, and advocacy efforts such as National Kidney Day events at the state capitol.

Preliminary findings reveal limited baseline knowledge about kidney health, low consumption of vegetables, and reliance on processed foods among participants. Interactive cooking demonstrations and expanded curricula have improved knowledge and confidence in healthy food preparation. Multimedia campaigns have increased public exposure to CKD information, although measurable impact requires further evaluation.

This project underscores the critical importance of culturally sensitive, community-based strategies to reduce CKD disparities. By addressing social determinants and promoting early lifestyle modifications, Mississippi aims to improve kidney health equity and reduce the burden of CKD statewide.

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66 Using research to create an innovative check-and-connect teaching strategy.

Dr. Justin Brogan[1], Ms. Mandy Brogan[2]

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Abstract

With a continued decline in student academic performance in the U.S., the need for strong teacher leadership in the classroom has never been more urgent. One key aspect of effective teacher leadership is the development and use of evidence-based strategies that can positively influence student success. Research consistently highlights the importance of strong teacher-student relationships in promoting academic

growth and achievement, therefore the participating teacher developed and collected data on a new student-teacher interactional model.

To foster relationships, the middle school social studies teacher implemented an approach labeled **check-and-connect**—a strategy designed to build trust through intentional, one-on-one conversations with students. By briefly asking a structured set of questions, the teacher aimed to create meaningful weekly connections with each student. These interactions cultivated a supportive classroom environment, where students felt seen, heard, and valued.

This approach is particularly useful for content-area teachers who need practical strategies that fit within the daily demands of instruction. The check-and-connect method is straightforward to apply and was shown to be impactful in a real classroom setting. The outcomes of this classroom-based study suggest that check-and-connect goes beyond academic improvement; it contributes to a more positive and collaborative learning environment. Students benefit from consistent, caring communication, while teachers gain deeper insight into their students' needs and experiences. Though this research study was conducted in a social studies classroom, the method is adaptable to any subject area. Teachers across disciplines can use this strategy to engage students on a personal level, ultimately promoting stronger performance and well-being throughout the school year.

The findings of this study affirm the critical role that teacher-student interactions play in influencing academic outcomes. Students in the treatment group, who engaged in the **check-and-connect** intervention, demonstrated significantly higher academic performance compared to their peers in the control group. This suggests that a structured, time-efficient strategy focused on relationship-building can positively affect student achievement. A central consideration in designing the check-and-connect model was feasibility. Recognizing the demanding schedules of classroom teachers, the intervention was intentionally simple and easily integrated into daily routines. Despite its brevity, the approach proved effective in strengthening relationships that contributed to a more positive classroom culture and enhanced student motivation.

Two key insights emerged from the data. First, building rapport with students through non-academic, personal interactions fosters a supportive learning environment conducive to academic improvement. Second, when students feel genuinely connected to their teachers, they are more likely to demonstrate increased effort and engagement in their academic work. In essence, the check-and-connect model illustrates how intentional, relationship-focused practices—requiring minimal time—can lead to meaningful improvements in student outcomes. These findings underscore the value of teacher leadership in implementing evidence-based strategies that prioritize both relational and academic growth.

238 Annotate & Create: HQIM + Pedagogy = Instructional SUPERPOWER!

Ms. Amber Brantley, Ms. DeeDee Cain

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Abstract

In today's educational classroom, HQIM provides a vital content foundation for effective instruction. However, true pedagogical excellence emerges when educators move beyond mere compliance with these materials and instead leverage them as springboards for dynamic, student-centered learning experiences. This session will empower all instructors to make the critical, necessary enhancements for effective instruction. We'll collaboratively explore strategies to transcend the “one size fits all” outline to infuse expertise and creativity into every lesson, ensuring it truly resonates with the diverse needs of learners, while still upholding the fidelity and rigor of the HQIM.

Participants will receive a practical **checklist**, serving as a comprehensive guide as we delve into **meaningful lesson annotation**. This isn't about simply jotting down notes; it's about developing a strategic approach to lesson preparation that transforms pre-made materials into targeted, high-impact instruction. We will work together to understand how to dissect lessons to identify key leverage components and proactively plan for creative, effective implementation. This goes beyond the surface level, encouraging you to deeply analyze the "why" behind each practice/activity and consider how it can be adapted to foster deeper understanding and engagement for all students.

The benefits for participants are immediate and tangible. You will gain a robust annotation checklist for **implementation that can be incorporated into any instructional setting**, regardless of your specific content area or grade level. Through **modeling and guided support,** we will collaboratively incorporate the checklist into an example annotated lesson. This means moving beyond the generic approach that focuses on teaching to instead a learning approach that provides differentiation opportunities. Imagine the amount of time saved with technology and this checklist in designing lessons where you seamlessly transition from the alignment of explicit instruction to engaging practice and finally to independent application, all while expertly leveraging your teaching “superpower” with the systematic HQIM.

This professional development isn't just about improving your planning; it's about fundamentally elevating instruction with vital tools for success, which ultimately is a win for students! By the end of this session, you will possess the resources and confidence to consistently create effective, **integrated instruction** that targets student needs and best practices. We hope to see you there as we develop a clear roadmap for ensuring that every minute of instruction is impactful and engaging as educators with "superpower." This is your opportunity to redefine the simplistic HQIM teaching approach and unleash full pedagogical potential in the classroom.

43 Addressing Book Insecurity: From Early Literacy Success to College Access Programming

Dr. Jeff Whittingham, Dr. Charlotte Parham, Dr. Donna Wake, Dr. Rachelle Miller

University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

Abstract

Book insecurity—lacking reliable access to books and experiencing anxiety about book acquisition or loss—represents a critical barrier spanning early childhood through college preparation. This presentation examines how book insecurity undermines educational progress across two vital intervention points: the transition from early literacy programs like the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and within federal college access initiatives like GEAR UP.

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library successfully delivers free monthly books to over 2 million children from birth to age five, building strong foundation libraries during critical development. However, as children age out, many low-income students lose consistent book access when literacy demands intensify. Research reveals that 96% of low-income middle schoolers worry about losing books compared to 27% of middle-income peers, with 78% of book abandonment cases tied to housing instability and family disruptions.

This crisis continues into GEAR UP populations—one of the most significant federal investments in college access programming. While GEAR UP addresses academic preparation, college counseling, and financial literacy for low-income students from middle school through college, it overlooks this fundamental educational barrier. Data reveals stark disparities: 52% of low-income students own 25 or fewer books versus 10% of middle-income students, while family reading discussions occur in just 16% of low-income households compared to 97% of middle-income families.

Through Maslow's hierarchy, book insecurity threatens students' safety (anxiety about fines), belongingness (exclusion from reading communities), esteem (limited academic achievement), and self-actualization (restricted access to transformative literature). For students who initially thrived under early literacy initiatives, persistent book insecurity derails educational progress and compounds college readiness barriers.

Digital divide issues further complicate challenges. While 76% of low-income students rely on smartphones for reading compared to 30% of middle-income students using dedicated devices, this disparity limits engagement with complex academic texts required for college preparation.

This presentation provides a comprehensive framework for addressing book insecurity across educational transitions. Evidence-based strategies include developing extended early literacy programming beyond age five, establishing classroom libraries with unlimited access, eliminating punitive barriers like library fines, creating book ownership programs through community partnerships, and integrating book security initiatives into existing GEAR UP frameworks.

The implications extend beyond individual outcomes to program effectiveness and educational equity. By creating a continuum of book access from early childhood through college preparation, communities can safeguard literacy investments while strengthening pathways from poverty to postsecondary success. Schools implementing these integrated approaches may see improved reading achievement, increased college enrollment, enhanced family engagement, and stronger community literacy networks.

This session will equip educators, librarians, GEAR UP administrators, policymakers, and early literacy stakeholders with practical tools for recognizing and addressing book insecurity across educational transitions—ensuring reading accessibility throughout a child's educational journey while strengthening foundations for college and career success.

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201 Integrating Service Dogs into P-12 Schools: Legal, Logistical, and Educational Considerations

-- Malerie Partain, -- Isadora McAllister, Dr. Julie Herbstrith

Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA

Abstract

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand how to prepare P-12 schools to integrate service dogs into their systems. Service dogs perform tasks for people with disabilities (Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990), referred to as handlers (e.g., McManus et al., 2021). There is an increased presence of service dogs in P-12 schools (Baird et al., 2023; Lindsay & Thiyagarajah, 2021) but the literature on the experiences of handlers and others in the school ecosystem is sparse.

Importantly, the 2012 update of the Americans with Disabilities Act includes service animals for physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disabilities (Walthall, 2012), allowing for handlers with disabilities like Autism Spectrum Disorder

and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. The ADA also protects the use of service animals in schools (Walthall, 2012). Thus, it is important to understand how to successfully integrate service dogs and their handlers into the P-12 school system.

Methodology

Participants were recruited through purposeful snowball sampling from the service dog community. We interviewed 10 adult service dog handlers and two service dog trainers. In addition to the interview, handlers completed a demographic survey and responded to a follow-up survey. Interviews, conducted via Webex, explored the impact of service dogs on daily routines, legal and ethical challenges, and strategies for effective integration.

Results

Using an epistemologically diversified approach to data analysis (e.g., Sabnis & Newman, 2023), a team of three researchers used NVivo software to code handler interview data. The results revealed that participants faced significant barriers related to legal knowledge gaps among the public and school staff, logistical challenges of daily routines, and inconsistent application of ADA, IDEA, and Section 504 guidelines. Although we found that service dogs provide meaningful and impactful differences for their handlers, the data also suggest that outsiders may fail to see their utility and question their need, particularly for handlers with hidden disabilities.

Our findings highlight the importance of equipping educators with legal knowledge, practical strategies, and collaborative approaches to successfully support students and staff who use service dogs in school environments.

Implications

This study has implications for all P-12 stakeholders who will likely encounter educators, staff, and children with service dogs. Administrators, educators, and support staff can refer to our findings to support handlers, prepare classrooms, provide consultation on policy, and prepare school systems to integrate service dogs into daily routines.

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74 Don’t Drown the Lifeguard: Balancing Job Demands and Resources to Enhance Higher Ed Faculty Well-Being

Dr. Amy Benton[1], Dr. Angela Girdley[2], Dr. Carrie Boden[3], Ms. Kandi Pomeroy[3]

[1]Samford University, Homewood, AL, USA. [2]Baylor University, Waco, TX, USA. [3]Texas State University, San Marcos, TX, USA

Abstract

Abstract

This study explores the interplay between job demands and resources in shaping the professional quality of life for university faculty, with a focus on emotional labor, compassion fatigue (CF), burnout (BO), and secondary traumatic stress (STS). Using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory as a framework, the research investigates how faculty-specific demands, such as student-related stressors (SRS), secondary trauma exposure, and emotional dissonance, interact with job resources like organizational support and self-care to influence outcomes of compassion satisfaction (CS), BO, and STS. The study addresses two primary research questions: (1) How do social and emotional job demands explain variability in faculty CF, BO, and STS? (2) How do organizational and personal job resources mitigate these effects?

The research employs a cross-sectional design, gathering data from 468 faculty members across regionally accredited U.S. institutions via a comprehensive survey. Key measures include the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL), the Self-Care Assessment for Psychologists (SCAP), and adapted scales for emotional dissonance and student-related stressors. Hierarchical regression analyses reveal that job demands, particularly SRS and emotional dissonance, significantly predict BO and STS while negatively impacting CS. Trauma exposure, while positively associated with BO and STS, demonstrates a nuanced relationship with CS, becoming a positive predictor when SRS is accounted for. Negative emotional dissonance (NED) exacerbates BO and reduces CS, while positive emotional dissonance (PED) contributes to BO and STS without affecting CS.

Job resources, including perceived organizational support (POS) and self-care practices, emerge as critical buffers. POS significantly reduces BO and enhances CS but shows limited impact on STS. Self-care practices, particularly professional development, life balance, and cognitive strategies, mitigate BO and enhance CS but fail to address STS effectively. These findings underscore the limitations of individual coping strategies in managing trauma exposure and highlight the need for systemic institutional interventions.

The study identifies significant implications for higher education institutions. Faculty well-being is increasingly strained by the emotional labor required in student-centered and trauma-informed teaching practices. Institutions must address the "hidden curriculum of care" by integrating trauma-responsive practices, expanding access to mental health resources, and fostering supportive organizational climates. Specific recommendations include revising student evaluation systems, promoting emotional regulation training, and embedding self-care into institutional culture. Future research should explore longitudinal dynamics of faculty well-being, the role of intrinsic motivation, and the efficacy of targeted interventions for STS.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on faculty well-being, emphasizing the complex interplay between job demands and resources. It highlights the urgent need for higher education institutions to prioritize faculty support, not only to

enhance professional quality of life but also to sustain the broader mission of fostering resilient academic communities.

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214 Outdoor Play: A Qualitative Inquiry into Perceptions of Preschool Teachers

Dr. Rebecca Giles

University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL, USA

Abstract

Playing outside provides a unique opportunity for unstructured, vigorous activities in a natural environment. For young children, outdoor play is a fundamental aspect of growth and learning, contributing to their holistic development and deepening their understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. Despite a general awareness of outdoor play's importance, there is limited knowledge of preschool teachers' beliefs about young children's outdoor play. This study was designed to gain insight into preschool teachers' views of outdoor play (environment and function) and their role in facilitating children's play outdoors. Data were collected from preschool teachers (N = 13) purposefully selected from different types of early childhood programs (Montessori, nature-based, and public school) using an open-ended questionnaire. Inductive content analysis is being used to determine themes among participants' perceptions overall and by program type. Given the large amount of time American children spend in childcare and early education programs, preschool teachers are uniquely positioned to advocate for outdoor play as an extension of classroom learning and educate others regarding the significant contribution of outdoor play to young children's healthy development. Understanding preschool teachers' views of outdoor play can assist early childhood teacher educators in better preparing future preschool teachers and expand the early childhood profession's ability to ensure adequate outdoor play for young children, thus, bettering the lives of children, schools, and communities.

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239 Early Childhood Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating AI into Children's Language Development: Beliefs, Experiences, and Professional Needs

Dr. Aidong Linda Zhang[1], Dr. Suyi Liu[2]

[1]Wayne State College, Wayne, Nebreska, USA. [2]Defense Language Institute, Monterey, California, USA

Abstract

Supporting children's language development is a core component of early childhood education. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools have become more prevalent in educational settings, including early childhood classrooms. AI language tools offer the potential to individualize language instruction and expand children's exposure to language-rich environments. However, most early childhood educators are not yet equipped with the knowledge or training to effectively integrate AI into their teaching practices. This creates an urgent need to investigate teachers' beliefs, their classroom teaching practices, and the needs of professional training of using AI to support children's early language learning.

This study aims to explore early childhood teachers' perceptions of integrating AI to support children's language development, vocabulary acquisition, and foundational literacy skills. It examines both the perceived benefits and the challenges of incorporating AI tools into early language instruction. The goal is to better understand teachers' beliefs, experiences, and professional development needs to ensure the thoughtful, developmentally appropriate use of AI in early learning environments.

Semi-structured interviews were utilized as a method of inquiry to explore the early childhood educators' attitudes, experiences, and professional needs in using AI in supporting children's language development. All five participants have had more than three years of teaching experience in working with children from diverse cultural backgrounds. Interview questions focused on their understanding of integrating AI into children's language development, their classroom teaching practices, and their needs for professional training to evaluate and select developmentally appropriate AI tools effectively.

Interview data were analyzed using thematic coding techniques to identify patterns and divergent perspectives. Three main themes emerged from the data. First, many early childhood teachers expressed interest in integrating AI to enhance children's language development, vocabulary acquisition, and storytelling skills. Second, teachers raised concerns about the potential negative impacts of AI, including increased usage of screen time and reduced human interaction that are elements vital for authentic language development. Lastly, participants emphasized the need for targeted professional development, including training focused on AI literacy and guidance on how to evaluate and implement developmentally appropriate AI tools in early childhood settings.

This study centered early childhood teacher voices in the conversation about AI integration. It provided a stepping-stone for preparing early childhood educators to become competent in utilizing AI in supporting children's language development. Recommendations include integrating AI literacy into early childhood education

programs and providing evaluation frameworks for developmentally appropriate AI integration. By addressing these needs, the early childhood educators will be better prepared to effectively integrating AI into children's learning while maintaining the authentic and play-based approaches that are fundamental to quality early learning experiences.

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173 Learning the Language: A Study of Gamification in Foreign Language Courses

Dr. Kim Godwin, Dr. Jim Rost

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine student perceptions of gamification in online French language learning courses. In response to revised proficiency guidelines from the American Association for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, a complete restructuring of French 1010 courses was undertaken. This resulted in an opportunity to develop a brand new OER textbook (Pressbook), companion workbooks (H5P), and to structure the course utilizing gamification strategies (Deterding et al., 2011; Plass et al., 2015). The course itself was developed utilizing these resources to be offered fully in-person, blended, and asynchronous online formats. Student feedback was gathered throughout the first semester of offering to adjust course processes and topics for continuous improvement.

Grounded in self-determination and choice theories (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Glasser, 1998), students were introduced to elements that promote intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to promote engagement in course content. Through such activities as leader boards, point scoring, badging, and low or no stakes activities, students interacted with the course materials as they were motivated, promoting choice and autonomy in learning and language acquisition (Garris et al., 2002). Gamification elements were introduced within the textbook, workbooks, and classroom to promote engagement and provide structured feedback for students. Students were surveyed to gather perceptions of the role of game-based learning techniques in language acquisition and application at the conclusion of the semester.

Initial findings will be presented in a roundtable format for other faculty interested in gamification, OER, or language acquisition. Examples of gamification elements and OER resources will be made available to further discussion with table participants

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29 The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Special Education Referral and Evaluation Process: Implications for Educational Diagnostician Preparation

Dr. Marie Goff

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA, USA

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted educational systems nationwide, with potentially lasting effects on special education processes and outcomes. This mixed-methods research project investigated how the pandemic affected the special education referral and evaluation process across Louisiana, with implications for improving preparation of educational diagnosticians in the post-pandemic era.

Using the Special Education Process Profile (SpEdPP) survey instrument, data were collected from 86 educational diagnosticians across 14 Louisiana school districts, representing a 73% response rate. The study examined three distinct periods: pre-pandemic (2018-2019), pandemic (2020-2021), and post-pandemic recovery (2022-2024). Additionally, structured follow-up interviews were conducted with 12 educational diagnosticians representing diverse district types to provide contextual understanding of quantitative findings.

Results revealed dramatic disruptions in special education processes. Referral patterns showed a 38% decrease during the pandemic, followed by a 62% surge upon return to in-person instruction. The disruption was most pronounced in early elementary grades (K-3), where referrals decreased by 47% during virtual instruction periods. Evaluation timelines extended considerably, increasing from an average of 58 days pre-pandemic to 97 days during the crisis, with current timelines still averaging 76 days, suggesting persistent systemic challenges.

Disability classification patterns shifted noticeably, with increases in emotional/behavioral disabilities (21%), other health impairments (17%), and specific learning disabilities in reading domains (24%), while speech/language impairment classifications declined by 14%. Educational diagnosticians reported significant challenges, with 78% expressing concerns about virtual assessment validity, 83% implementing procedural modifications, and 84% requesting additional training on differentiating pandemic-related learning gaps from disability-related challenges.

Analysis identified five critical areas requiring adaptation in educational diagnostician preparation programs: remote assessment competency, differentiated analysis skills, accelerated intervention knowledge, enhanced parent collaboration approaches, and adaptive procedural implementation. Root causes included inconsistent RTI/MTSS implementation during remote instruction (76%), limited digital assessment tools (68%), classroom observation difficulties (88%), parental consent challenges (71%), and staffing shortages (64%).

These findings directly inform curriculum modifications for educational diagnostician preparation programs, particularly addressing competencies needed for post-pandemic educational landscapes. The research demonstrates how systematic inquiry and data-driven decision making can guide program improvements, exemplifying the conference theme of cultivating lifelong researchers who use evidence-based practices to enhance educational outcomes.

This study contributes to understanding pandemic impacts on special education while providing practical strategies for preparing educational diagnosticians to operate effectively in evolving educational contexts.

Keywords: COVID-19, special education, educational diagnosticians, evaluation processes, teacher preparation, pandemic impact

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28 Course Correction: Making Systematic Changes to Improve Field Experiences for Aspiring Teachers in Initial Courses

Dr. Marie Goff, Dr. Melanie Lemoine

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Abstract

Teacher preparation programs face ongoing challenges in designing meaningful field experiences that effectively connect theoretical coursework with classroom practice. This paper examines systematic changes implemented at Southeastern Louisiana University to improve Pre-Residency Clinical Practice experiences for aspiring teachers, specifically within the Introduction to Exceptional Education (EDES) course.

Using Kolb's experiential learning theory as our framework, we redesigned field experience requirements from traditional two-hour classroom observations to shorter, more frequent, and diverse learning experiences. This change addresses current research suggesting that future education programs should create varied learning experiences that collectively form a comprehensive clinical education program (van der Hijden, 2019).

Our institution employs a three-tiered approach to clinical practice: Exposure Tier (introduction courses with volunteer activities and observations), Developing Tier (targeted placement with cooperating teachers for instruction), and Residency Tier (year-long capstone experience). The study focuses on modifications within the Exposure Tier, where students traditionally completed two one-hour special education classroom observations and recorded their experiences.

Based on student feedback and literature review, instructors recognized the need for more meaningful engagement. The National Council on Teacher Quality identifies six components of effective clinical practice: strong university-district partnerships, cooperating teachers, supervisor training, quality placement sites, aspiring teacher support and supervision, and data collection and analysis (Putman, 2024). Our redesign addresses these components while aligning with Kolb's four-stage learning process: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation.

The systematic changes involved replacing lengthy, infrequent observations with multiple shorter interactions that provide diverse exposure to special education settings. This modification allows students to experience various classroom environments, teaching strategies, and student populations while maintaining connection to course content about disabilities, definitions, and inclusive practices.

Initial findings indicate that aspiring teachers demonstrate stronger connections between pedagogical theory and practice when engaged in varied, frequent field experiences. Students report increased understanding of course concepts and greater confidence in working with diverse learners. The shorter format also provides more flexibility for both university students and cooperating schools.

This research contributes to the growing literature on clinical practice reform and demonstrates how systematic, theory-driven changes can enhance teacher preparation. The study provides practical strategies for other institutions seeking to improve field experience components while maintaining alignment with accreditation standards and professional expectations.

Our work exemplifies the conference theme of cultivating lifelong researchers by demonstrating how continuous inquiry, reflection, and evidence-based decision making drive improvements in teacher preparation practices.

Keywords: Teacher preparation, clinical practice, field experiences, experiential learning, special education

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110 Energizing CS Education: Evaluating a Teacher Certification Program's Alignment and Impact for Praxis 5652 Preparation

Dr. Lindsey "Ellen" Caillouet, Dr. Bonnie Achee, Dr. Paula Calderon, Ms. Asuman Sekeroglu

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana, USA

Abstract

In 2022, [XXX] enacted the Computer Science Education Act 541, which established the Computer Science Education Advisory Commission to develop recommendations for implementing computer science education in all public schools. The [XXX] project is a partnership between the [XXX] Department of Education and [XXX] University's Department of Computer Science and College of Education. The purpose of [XXX] is to prepare teachers to successfully obtain computer science certification by passing the Praxis exam 5652. This study examined the effectiveness of the course content alignment to the needs of teachers preparing for a CS Praxis exam and teaching CS in Grades 6–12 in [XXX] schools. The goal was to answer the following research question: 1. To what extent do course materials align with current research on effective content/pedagogy? Additionally, the paper examines teachers' perceptions of the course, its effectiveness in delivering content, and its suitability as a foundation for a CS curriculum. A mixed-methods approach was employed to analyze data from both quantitative and qualitative sources, examining the alignment, effectiveness, and impact of a course designed to prepare teachers for the CS Praxis exam. Focus groups and interviews provide a deeper understanding of the concerns related to the course. Results indicate there were 28 components across seven modules in the CMPS Praxis Course emphasizing core CS concepts. Of the eight core CS concepts, the vast majority of instructional materials were devoted to Programming, while the least represented was the Impacts of Computing section. Furthermore, participating teachers reported significantly lower levels of concern in the EOC survey for eight of the nine items in the concerns scales, statistically significant gains in levels of readiness, and statistically significant losses in four of the five beliefs items, all related to teaching CS; and no statistically significant change in any of the six self-efficacy items. Further review of content and implementation of course lessons addressing self-efficacy, expectations, and beliefs is recommended.

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158 The Future of Foreign Language Education: Generative AI Scientists' Perspective

Dr. Suyi Liu[1], Mr. Sushant Mehta[2], Ms. Ishita Prasad[3], Dr. Linda Aidong Zhang[4], Ms. Yulian Wang[1]

[1]Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, Monterey, CA, USA. [2]Google DeepMind, Mountain View, CA, USA. [3]Facebook Robotics & Embodied AI Research, Seattle, WA, USA. [4]Wayne State College, Wayne, NE, USA

Abstract

With the rapid advancement of generative AI technologies, an increasingly important debate has emerged regarding the future of foreign language education: whether human teachers may become obsolete or be gradually replaced by AI systems. This

study aims to rigorously investigate the concern by exploring the perspectives of bilingual or multilingual generative AI scientists on the future development and application of such technologies in foreign language education. A cross-sectional survey design was used to collect data from 161 bilingual or multilingual AI scientists working at leading organizations in this field. The survey was guided by a modified Technology Acceptance Model, incorporating constructs from both the original TAM and its extension, TAM 2. Key variables include perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, subjective norms, image, output quality, and behavioral intention. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation to identify significant patterns and relationships among variables. Additionally, qualitative data from open-ended responses was also coded and analyzed thematically. The study found that scientists generally view GenAI as useful and feasible for foreign language education, but not as a replacement for teachers; rather, they envision a future in which AI augments instruction while educators shift toward roles involving mentorship, cultural mediation, and ethical oversight. The findings suggest that successful adoption of GenAI requires a human-centered approach that prioritizes output quality, trust, responsible use, and professional development, emphasizing augmentation over automation.

Mentors Committee's Session 1: Overcoming Obstacles: Strategies for Emerging Scholars and Early Career Professionals

15:00 - 15:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Presentation type Mentor Session
Nancy Hamilton

This interactive session will focus on providing support for emerging scholars and early career academics as they navigate professional demands. Whether challenges with conducting research, completing a dissertation, conflicts within academia, or early career struggles, the MSERA Mentors can provide insight to support your career success. Approximately 40% of the session time will be devoted to Q&A with participants.

RiP Lecture - STEM, Professional Development

16:00 - 16:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Lecture)
Kelly Byrd

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130 Supporting STEM Engagement in Toddler Classrooms Through Environmental Modification

Ms. Melissa Johnson

Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA, USA

Abstract

Research Problem or Objectives

STEM research in early childhood, as emphasized by the Early Childhood STEM Working Group (2017), helps raise awareness of the important role that science, technology, engineering, and math play in child development. While we know how critical these skills are, toddler classrooms are often left out of the STEM conversation. This study explores how small but intentional changes to toddler classroom environments—specifically, the addition of developmentally appropriate STEM materials—can increase both child and teacher engagement in meaningful ways. The goal is to highlight how everyday interactions in toddler settings can become powerful STEM learning opportunities when educators are equipped with the right tools and understanding.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

This work is grounded in constructivist theory, particularly the work of Jean Piaget, who emphasized the importance of hands-on, exploratory learning during early childhood. Additionally, the study connects to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which supports the role of teacher mediation in scaffolding learning through social interaction. These frameworks along with the Infant Toddler Inquiry Learning Model align with what I've seen in the field through my experiences as both an educator and coach, that toddlers learn best through rich environments, responsive interactions, and repeated opportunities to explore materials with intention and support. This study takes those beliefs and puts them into practice through real classroom implementation.

Research Questions and Relevant Literature

This study is guided by two research questions:

1. What impact do developmentally appropriate STEM-related environmental modifications have on toddlers' engagement with STEM materials during free choice time?
2. What impact do these environmental modifications have on teacher engagement with STEM materials during free choice time?

While much of the literature focuses on STEM in preschool and elementary settings, we know from research that the foundations start much earlier. Studies have shown that high-quality environments support inquiry, problem-solving, and early math and science development (Copple & Bredekamp, 2006; NAEYC & NCTM, 2010). However, current environmental tools like ITERS-R or CLASS don't specifically assess STEM opportunities for toddlers. This research project aims to be a stepping stone to begin to fill this gap.

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

This study will use a single-case research design with a multiple baseline across subjects approach. Each classroom will serve as its own control, and changes are introduced one at a time to measure the direct effects of the intervention. This approach to research is particularly useful in early childhood settings where group randomization isn't always practical. This approach will also allow me to see real-time changes in engagement as environments are modified.

Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

Participants will include four toddler classrooms in a Southeast Louisiana early learning center. Classrooms will be selected using convenience sampling, and inclusion criteria require that classrooms serve toddlers (13–36 months) and have at least one teacher with a Child Development Associate (CDA) and two or more years of experience working with infants or toddlers.

Classrooms will be observed during free choice time, and child and teacher engagement with STEM materials will be recorded using momentary time sampling (Kazdin, 2021) Before making any changes to the classroom, each space will be assessed using a new tool I created—the Toddler STEM Environmental Assessment Tool (T-SEAT). The tool includes a section that rates foundational classroom elements (schedule, layout, lesson plans) and another that rates the presence and quality of STEM materials aligned to Louisiana's Early Learning and Development Standards and CDC child development standards. Many of the materials listed in the T-SEAT are derived from tools such as the CLASS Environment tool and the ITERS-R.

Each classroom will receive up to $75 in new STEM materials (both natural and store-bought) based on their baseline scores. The goal is to support a minimum rating of "2" across all four STEM domains (science, technology, engineering, math). Materials might include ramps, measuring cups, magnets, rocks, and stacking toys. Teachers will receive a short mediation session to help them understand the purpose of the materials

and how to support inquiry-based play. From there, more data will be collected to determine engagement with STEM materials after intervention has occurred.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Although data collection is ongoing, I anticipate that we'll see increases in toddler engagement with STEM materials after environmental modifications are made. I also expect to see more teacher interactions that support STEM learning—things like modeling, questioning, and joining in problem-solving. Early feedback on the T-SEAT has been positive, with coaches and field experts saying it's practical and easy to use. The data will help determine whether this tool could be used on a broader scale to support environmental coaching and classroom planning.

Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution to the Field

STEM within the context of early childhood has been linked to improved outcomes in language, literacy, writing, and math skills (Butcher et al., 2017; Brenneman et al., 2019; Amsbary, et al., 2023). Research also supports that STEM focused efforts have an impact on academic success and support learning later in life (Movahedazarhouligh, et al., 2022). This study will contribute to the early childhood field in three key ways:

1. It provides an example of how simple, low-cost changes to toddler classrooms can support early STEM engagement;
2. It introduces and tests a new STEM-specific environmental tool (T-SEAT) that could be useful to coaches, administrators, and teachers;
3. It adds to the limited body of research on STEM learning in toddler settings, which is often overlooked in both policy and practice.

Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Prior to the Annual Meeting

By the time of the Annual Meeting, I plan to complete the following:

- Final validation of the T-SEAT tool;
- Full baseline data collection, intervention completion and the start of post-intervention data collection;
- Interobserver agreement data collection

95 Engaging Middle School Mathematics Teachers in Improvement Science in Tandem with Coaching Support

Ms. Elizabeth Harkey

Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA

Abstract

Middle grades mathematics teachers must continuously engage in professional learning to shift their instruction to align with the research-based practices in mathematics education (Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators [AMTE], 2017; Berry & Berry, 2017; Borko, 2004; National Council of Teachers of Mathematics [NCTM], 1991, 2000, 2014, 2018, 2020; National Research Council, 2001), but for teachers to be self-sustaining in their professional learning they must develop an inquiry stance (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Farmer et al., 2003; Loucks-Horsley et al., 1996; NCTM, 1991). Professional learning strategies that promote teachers' development of an inquiry stance (i.e., testing, revising, and reflecting continuously on instruction) hold the potential to empower teachers to be self-sustaining regarding their professional learning. Not all professional learning strategies explicitly reflect an inquiry stance where teachers implement ideas, reflect, and revise strategies to fit their context (Farmer et al., 2003). However, improvement science with the inclusion of Plan-Do-Study-Act [PDSA] cycles (Bryk et al., 2015) holds potential in this regard.

Improvement science is a disciplined inquiry that facilitates the integration of new knowledge in context using quick cycles of inquiry, referred to as PDSA cycles. PDSA cycles have a four-step process with the overall goal of testing and reflecting on a specific intervention (Langley et al., 2009). Given the emphasis on testing and reflecting, PDSA cycles (Langley et al., 2009) support teachers' engagement in processes associated with having an inquiry stance (Farmer et al., 2003). Although the processes associated with PDSA cycles align with actions taken by teachers holding an inquiry stance, it is not known how intentionally engaging middle grades mathematics teachers in PDSA cycles may serve as a professional learning strategy for enhancing teachers' instruction to better align with the Mathematics Teaching Practices (MTPs; NCTM, 2014) or influencing the development of a teacher's inquiry stance. The purpose of this study was to explore middle grades mathematics teachers' experiences implementing improvement science methods including PDSA cycles as a professional learning strategy in tandem with coaching support to enhance their instructional practice and support continued professional learning. Specifically, this study focused on middle grades teachers' utilization of the MTPs and development of an inquiry stance.

Implementation of Improvement Science with Coaching Support. During this study, two middle grades mathematics teachers, Ms. Jordan and Ms. Plum, worked with their school's instructional coach over a 10 week period to utilize improvement science methods with a goal of enhancing their instructional practice. Ms. Jordan held a teaching license for grades 7–12 in mathematics. At the time of the study, she was in

her ninth year of teaching and her third year teaching middle school mathematics. She was responsible for teaching 7th grade mathematics and one period of computer science. Ms. Plum held a K–6 teaching license and was in her sixth year of teaching. She had previously taught third grade for four years and was in her second year of teaching sixth grade mathematics. At the beginning of the study, the teachers and instructional coach engaged in a professional learning session that introduced improvement science including PDSA cycles. During this professional learning session, the teachers set an aim for themselves focused on their use of the MTPs to drive their engagement in the PDSA cycles. In the weeks that followed, the teachers engaged in 12 PDSA cycles with scaffolded coaching support. During the first four cycles, the instructional coach provided in-classroom support and engaged in debriefings with the teachers to discuss future steps. In the next four cycles, the instructional coach did not provide in-classroom support but still met with the teachers during debriefings. Then, the teachers engaged independently in the last four PDSA cycles.

Data Collection and Analysis. This project uses a qualitative exploratory multiple-case study design (Yin, 2018) with each case being the phenomenon of a teacher being coached to use the MTPs and engage in PDSA cycles. Data includes classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, copies of the iterations of improvement science documents, a video-recording of the professional learning session, audio-recordings of debriefing meetings, teacher reflection responses, and field notes . Each exploratory case will be analyzed inductively and in a chronological sequence (Yin, 2018) looking for emergent themes (Saldaña, 2021) in response to the research questions. Within-case analysis and cross-case synthesis will be conducted.

Preliminary Findings. Preliminary findings indicate that improvement sciences methods including PDSA cycles can be leveraged to support teachers to enhance their instructional practice to better align with the MTPs. Both participants made progress in components associated with facilitating meaningful mathematical discourse (NCTM, 2014). Additionally, there are instances in the data of the participants taking ownership or recognizing the need for an inquiry stance toward their professional learning due to the nature of improvement science and PDSA cycles. The data does indicate that a teacher's personal investment in the professional learning opportunity may contribute to what they take away from the experience.

Anticipated Contribution to the Field. The preliminary findings support the idea that the implementation of improvement sciences with PDSA cycles in tandem with scaffolded coaching support can enhance middle school mathematics teachers' instructional practice and support the teachers in recognizing the need to have an inquiry stance. These activities represent ones that can be implemented as an in-school support attached to any professional learning program. Sharing the findings and materials with other mathematics teacher educators will provide them with resources and actionable steps to support their continued work with in-service teachers.

Anticipated Progress. Currently, this dissertation research is in the data analysis stage with early rounds of initial coding. By the MSERA conference, the goal is to complete

the analysis, culminating in case narratives and a cross case synthesis, leading to draft findings and implications.

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190 Bridging Barriers and Building Identity: Understanding STEM Engagement Among Equity-Seeking Students Through an Ecological Lens

Ms. Zaria Reed, Dr. Eli Jones

University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

Bridging Barriers and Building Identity: Understanding STEM Engagement Among Equity-Seeking Students Through an Ecological Lens

Research Problem or Objectives

Equity-seeking students often encounter systemic barriers that hinder consistent engagement and identity formation in STEM (Basham et al., 2010; Swartz et al., 2019). Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979), this study aims to (1) explore how ecological systems—peer relationships, adult interactions, and school environments—influence STEM engagement and identity, and (2) identify contextual and personal factors that act as supports or barriers (El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). The setting is a 5th-grade after-school STEM club in a southern urban center, facilitated through a university research partnership. This research seeks to inform inclusive, equity-centered approaches to STEM education (Basham et al., 2010; Çetinkaya et al., 2022).

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) conceptualizes development within nested systems: the microsystem (peers, teachers), mesosystem (home–school–club connections), exosystem (school policy), macrosystem (cultural norms), and chronosystem (life transitions) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). EST provides a holistic lens to examine how relationships and sociocultural narratives influence STEM identity and engagement. This framework aligns with the study's goal to promote more inclusive STEM program design by addressing the full ecosystem of student experience (Falloon et al., 2022).

Research Questions and Relevant Literature

This mixed-methods case study explores how equity-seeking students perceive scientists and form STEM identities across varied school settings. Research questions include:

1. How does participation in the STEM club influence student science identity in relation to ecological systems (e.g., peers, mentors, home)?
2. What contextual factors affect student engagement and retention?
3. How do students, teachers, and administrators perceive existing or missing connections between in-school and out-of-school STEM learning?

This study integrates visual, narrative, and contextual data to examine how systems like school climate and peer dynamics shape STEM identity. Research shows that students face barriers including inconsistent mentorship, limited access to quality STEM learning, and stereotypical views of scientists that reduce their sense of belonging (Falloon et al., 2022; Duerden & Witt, 2010; Toma et al., 2022; Reinisch et al., 2017). These obstacles are especially pronounced for students historically excluded from STEM opportunity structures (Reed, Jones, Harrell-Williams, Walden, Ayers, & Mule, 2025).

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

The study took place in a 10-week after-school STEM club hosted by over a dozen elementary schools in a southern U.S. city. The club was developed as part of a university-led community grant and guided students through the design of a prosthetic hand using a medical scenario.

This qualitative interview study centers multiple perspectives—students, teachers, club facilitators, and principals—to identify how ecological conditions shaped students' STEM identity and experience. Triangulating stakeholder perspectives enhances validity and allows for contextual depth.

Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

Primary data include semi-structured interviews with 24 students, 10 teachers, 5 facilitators, and 9 principals from 10 participating schools. Interviews focused on science identity development and contextual influences. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and will be thematically analyzed using a priori codes informed by EST.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Preliminary insights suggest strong peer and adult relationships positively influence STEM confidence and persistence (Basham et al., 2010; El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). Students who experienced encouragement and program continuity across contexts showed greater STEM identity and interest. Anticipated findings may highlight relational support, culturally responsive environments, and aligned learning experiences as key engagement factors (Dorji et al., 2022), while also noting persistent barriers such as mentorship gaps and resource inequities (Çetinkaya et al., 2022).

Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution

This study contributes a systems-level understanding of how relational, structural, and sociocultural forces shape STEM engagement among equity-seeking youth. It models a culturally responsive approach to STEM program evaluation, centering student voice and intersectional context to inform future research, practice, and policy.

Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Prior to the Annual Meeting

All interviews are complete, with transcription in progress. The research team will begin coding and thematic analysis in Fall 2025 and anticipates sharing early findings from student and facilitator interviews at the MSERA Annual Meeting.

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Discussion/Paper Lecture - Culturally Responsive Education, Gifted Education/Exceptional Students

16:00 - 16:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Lori Benoit

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209 From Hurt to Healing: Understanding the Impact of Childhood Abandonment and Empowering Black Boys in K-12 Education

Mr. Jarmel Bell

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN, USA

Abstract

This session presents findings from a qualitative phenomenological study exploring how African-American men make meaning of their experiences with childhood abandonment and the lasting impact on their behavior, academic motivation, and relationships during their K–12 years. Drawing on in-depth interviews with men ages 25–60, the study uncovers behavioral patterns and emotional struggles rooted in unresolved abandonment, often misinterpreted in school settings as defiance, apathy, or aggression.

Participants will engage with narratives that reflect not just pain, but insight, revealing what these men believe could have supported them better in school. The research highlights key behavioral manifestations, including difficulty forming trust, emotional dysregulation, and disengagement, all shaped by early emotional wounds.

This session bridges research and practice by sharing a culturally responsive, identity-focused framework—*I Am Me: Know Who You Are*—designed to help educators

recognize abandonment-related behaviors and respond with empathy, structure, and guidance. Emphasis will be placed on actionable strategies that build trust, encourage emotional regulation, and support identity development for Black boys in today's classrooms.

This work contributes to the growing field of trauma-informed education and encourages the need for culturally grounded research that informs both policy and practice. Attendees will leave with new insight into the behavioral roots of student conduct and tangible tools to support marginalized youth more effectively.

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118 Unmasking the Margins: Educator Perspectives on the Challenges and Promising Practices in Gifted Education

Dr. Lori Benoit, Ms. Madison Pitre

McNeese State University, Lake Charles, LA, USA

Abstract

Gifted education programs are often perceived as well-resourced and universally accessible, yet educators frequently encounter systemic barriers that limit equitable identification and support for gifted learners. This joint presentation explores these challenges from two complementary perspectives: a phenomenological study of practicing teachers of gifted students and an action research study conducted by a graduate student educator examining her development as a teacher-researcher. Qualitative interviews reveal recurring themes—such as insufficient funding, inconsistent identification practices, and limited training—which contribute to the marginalization of gifted education. Simultaneously, the action research highlights how teacher preparation can foster awareness of these issues and support the emergence of new advocates. Together, the findings point to a broader need for institutional and policy change: clearer, more inclusive criteria for identification, sustained professional development, and systemic recognition of gifted education as a core component of equity. This collaborative session will feature educator narratives and reflections as well as actionable recommendations for teacher preparation programs. Attendees will engage in dialogue around transforming gifted education through school-level practice and systemic reform.

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4 A Mixed-Methods Study: Understanding the Actions, Interactions, Beliefs, and RelationshipsBetween Father Figures and Their Gifted Children

Dr. Malani Hoffpauir

University of Louisiana at Lafayette, Lafayette, LA, USA

Abstract

The goal of this research was to investigate the relationship between fathers and their gifted child or children. There is a lack of research on fathers that extends to a lack of understanding of the influence and impact family members have on gifted children in a family unit. This emphasized a gap in the research on understanding of the needs of adolescents with gifts and talents, and their relation to the family units (Sear, 2016, 2021;Weaver & Schofield, 2015). Since research generally does not focus on fathers of individuals with gifts and talents, this mixed-methods research sought to understand the following question: How, if at all, do the beliefs, actions and interactions, and relationship between fathers and their adolescent gifted children impact fathers and their adult gifted children? In asking this question, the goal of this research was to understand how a father figures' involvement in their gifted child's life made an impact on the student. As part of this mixed methods study, the researcher gathered data through the pilot survey comprised of 43 individuals and conducted one-on-one interviews with 14 of these participants. Analysis of the data revealed that adult gifted children perceive that their father figures understand them and effectively communicate less confidently than the father figures perceive themselves.Additionally, the positive or negative perception adult gifted children had regarding their father figures was heavily reliant on the involvement, support, and communication provided by the father figures.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Educator Prep, College Success, Race & Anti-racism

16:00 - 16:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Tony Latiker

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152 Jackson Middle College: Lessons Learned Implementing a Pilot Dual Enrollment Program for Mathematics Pre-Service Teachers

Dr. Tony Latiker, Dr. Deidre Wheaton

Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, USA

Abstract

Over the last two decades numerous studies have stated that there is a dire need to increase the number of minority teachers in our nation's in urban school districts. Urban districts often struggle to attract and retain experienced or certified teachers in critical subject areas like mathematics. Decreasing enrollment in teacher preparation programs and testing requirements often disproportionately affect teachers from underrepresented backgrounds. Jackson State University (JSU), Jackson Public School District (JPSD), and the Southern Initiative Algebra Project partnered to pilot an innovative dual enrollment program to create a pipeline of mathematics educators for JPSD. Three cohorts of dually enrolled JPS students complete college coursework on the campus of JSU while completing their high school degrees. Upon completion of high school, they enter JSU as pre-service mathematics teachers with 60 hours of college coursework completed. This presentation will discuss the development, implementation, and lessons learned during the first three years of the pilot program known as Jackson Middle College.

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52 Stress Relief in Motion: How Physical Activity Enhances Mental Well-being in Nontraditional Female College Students

Dr. Jamie Mikell, Dr. William Davis

Athens State University, Athens, AL, USA

Abstract

Nontraditional female college students often carry a complex load—balancing coursework with jobs, parenting, caregiving, and other life responsibilities. These overlapping demands place them at increased risk for chronic stress, emotional fatigue, and diminished mental well-being. This study explored the impact of physical activity on stress management and enhancing self-worth. Focusing on women ages 25 to 50 enrolled at Athens State University, the research examined how their physical activity habits intersect with perceived stress and self-esteem.

An anonymous online survey gathered responses from more than 1,200 eligible students. The instrument included questions on demographics, exercise routines, stress perception, self-image, and common barriers to movement. Approximately 77% of participants reported noticing that engaging in physical activity helped them manage stress. Over half also linked physical activity to improved self-esteem across key areas: physical appearance (64%), physical health (55%), and mental health (55%). These findings align with prior research highlighting the benefits of moderate physical activity, particularly for women who navigate multiple roles.

Participants also cited barriers to physical activity, such as limited time, low motivation, caregiving responsibilities, lack of access to structured fitness environments, exhaustion, anxiety, and the strain of trying to meet everyone's needs but their own.

Despite these obstacles, walking emerged as the most popular form of physical activity due to its flexibility, accessibility, and low cost for women finding balance amid schedule demands.

Readily accessible interventions and opportunities like walking programs, wellness workshops, or virtual stress management tools could provide meaningful relief to nontraditional female students struggling with the weight of competing demands. When institutions recognize the lived experiences of nontraditional learners, they can create space to promote stress reduction, empowerment, academic success, and student retention.

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197 Heavy is the Head: Researching Plantation Politics While Still on the Plantation—The Emotional Labor of Researching Anti-Blackness in Higher Education

Dr. Shea Kuykendoll

University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

Researching anti-Blackness in higher education is not an abstract intellectual exercise. It is deeply personal, emotional, and often traumatic for Black scholars who are still embedded within the very systems they critique. This presentation offers an unflinching exploration of the emotional labor and spiritual cost of conducting anti-Blackness research from the inside. Drawing from my dissertation on Black Professional Staff experiences at a Historically White Institution during the Black Lives Matter Movement, I will share reflections on what it means to study anti-Black racism and plantation politics while still on the plantation.

The research revealed how Black Professional Staff continue to navigate institutional strongholds rooted in slavery, where labor is extracted, loyalty is demanded, but structural power remains out of reach. As a Black scholar-practitioner conducting this study while still employed within the same space, I had to carry not only the data but also the weight of their lived experience, making the process emotionally and mentally exhausting yet necessary.

The dissertation employed critical race theory in education (CRT), anti-Black racism, and plantation politics as theoretical frameworks, but it also required me to confront my own positionality, trauma, and vulnerability throughout the research journey. Four thematic findings emerged:

- **Still on the Plantation:** Black professionals are expected to perform invisible labor for institutional diversity efforts without meaningful decision-making power.

- **Racial Schizophrenia:** Refers to the duality of BPS' racial and cultural identity and the pressure to conform to white cultural norms and code-switching, which can be mentally and emotionally taxing.
- **From Golden Girls to Beckys/Karens:** White women operate as both gatekeepers and enforcers of racial boundaries, complicating allyship narratives, including bullying, verbal abuse, professional sabotage, and manipulation to damage professional and individual reputations.
- **Where Is That Folding Chair?:** A metaphor for the necessity of active, sometimes disruptive, resistance to protect Black life and dignity in professional spaces.

Beyond the findings, this presentation focuses on the emotional process of the researcher, the nights of rage, the moments of mental and physical exhaustion, and the need for speculative fiction as a coping and liberatory mechanism. Speculative fiction counterstory became more than just a methodological tool; it was a survival strategy, allowing me to imagine and write futures where Black professionals are no longer beholden to oppressive systems.

This session challenges traditional research norms that demand emotional detachment, framing vulnerability, grief, and radical imagination as valid components of rigorous scholarship. By narrating the behind-the-scenes process of conducting emotionally taxing research while still surviving in plantation-like structures, this presentation advocates for a new model of innovative, justice-centered research practice. One that accounts for the full humanity of the scholar.

For educational leaders, faculty, and emerging scholars, this session offers a call to reframe research as not just knowledge production but soul work. It urges the field to create space for emotional reflexivity, community care, and methods that resist colonial standards of objectivity. Researching anti-Blackness is not just about data collection; it is about bearing witness, breaking silences, and daring to imagine life beyond the plantation.

Poster Session

16:00 - 16:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Presentation type Poster
Mary Giles

38 A Study Replication to Improve Behavior using the Color Wheel System

Mr. Jeremy Hensley, Ms. Julianne Lopez, Ms. Zion Kamau, Dr. Mark Wildmon

Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA

Abstract

Effective classroom management is essential for creating and maintaining an environment that fosters academic engagement. Teachers in self-contained classrooms face challenges, as they must create highly individualized and supportive environments for students with learning needs that cannot be met in general education settings. This requires a comprehensive approach addressing each student's academic, behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs as outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

To explore effective behavior management in such settings, we investigated the use of the Color Wheel System in an elementary self-contained classroom. The Color Wheel System is a classroom management tool designed to promote consistent behavior management and increase student compliance with behavioral expectations. This provides visual stimuli to facilitate transitions between instructional activities and independent or group tasks. The system uses visual stimuli such as traffic light colors to provide consistent reminders for students regarding the behavioral expectations at each transition, thereby promoting adherence to established rules. Additionally, students in self-contained classrooms represent diverse populations but share behavioral support needs similar to those in traditional classrooms.

This study evaluated the effectiveness of the Color Wheel System in reducing off-task behavior, measured as a percentage, using an ABAB single-case design. This design was chosen to determine if a functional relationship exists between the intervention and behavioral outcomes by observing decreases in off-task behavior during intervention phases and reversions during non-intervention phases. The study spanned 10 weeks with an ABAB single-case design: five baseline sessions in the first two weeks, seven intervention sessions over the next three weeks, five withdrawal sessions during the following two weeks, and seven reimplementation sessions in the final three weeks. 10 participants were part of this study, that ranged from kindergarten through fourth grade, aged five to eleven, in a self-contained special education classroom at a rural, low-income elementary school. Students were placed based on developmental, academic, and behavioral needs outlined in their IEPs. All three teachers had prior experience working with students with disabilities and were familiar with instruction and behavior support, though none had implemented the Color Wheel System before. The classroom supported both academic instruction and behavioral development, using a large Promethean board for whole-group instruction and walls adorned with schedules, behavior charts, and color-coded cues to reinforce expectations and assist transitions.

Results demonstrated a significant decrease in off-task behavior during intervention phases, indicating that color-coded behavioral expectations, visual cues, and reinforcement procedures enhanced student engagement. Social validity questionnaires completed by staff and four students revealed positive feedback. Staff found the Color Wheel System acceptable, noted behavioral improvements, expressed willingness to recommend it, and found visual components helpful. All students reported that the system helped them understand class rules. Future research should examine individual components to determine the specific effectiveness of visual rules, transition cues, or reinforcement strategies.

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71 Improving Mentor Teacher Feedback in Early Field Experiences: A Pilot Redesign within the UTeach South Program

Ms. Erika Cheek, Ms. Tami May

University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL, USA

Abstract

The UTeach South program is a replication site of the national UTeach initiative out of Austin, TX, that prepares STEM majors to become secondary certified science and math teachers through a combination of coursework and intensive field experiences. As part of the introductory courses that we teach, our pre-service teachers participate in two foundational courses where they are placed in elementary (grades 3-5) and middle school (grades 6-8) classrooms. During these placements, the students collaborate with their on-campus instructors (us) and their partner in class to help plan and teach three inquiry-driven lessons in either mathematics or science. The mentor teachers are giving up their classroom time to observe their instruction and provide written comments to support their growth. This is a vital component of the experiences our students have.

Despite the intentional design of these field experiences, one recurring concern voiced by our students is the inconsistent quality and utility of the feedback they receive. Many mentor teachers provide limited or overly general comments, which reduces the formative value of the feedback and weakens its impact on instructional improvement from lesson to lesson. Additionally, mentor teachers often use specialized educational terminology that these introductory students have not yet learned. Without clear explanations or definitions, this language can create confusion and not lead to the overall purpose of the feedback.

This poster presentation seeks to highlight the efforts to improve the mentor feedback process by examining the current practices and piloting a new feedback form. First, the poster will outline the structure and goals of the UTeach South field placements and

share examples of the current feedback form and the types of comments typically provided. Common shortcomings of the current approach, like vague language, unexplained professional jargon, and a lack of actionable suggestions, will be discussed in detail. Based on this analysis, a revised feedback form was developed to better scaffold mentors in providing more focused, specific, and pedagogically relevant feedback aligned with the inquiry-based type of lessons that are taught.

The redesigned form will be piloted during the upcoming fall semester, and the poster will present its features and anticipated impact. Though data collection is forthcoming, this project serves as a foundation for future research on mentoring efficacy in teacher preparation programs. It reflects the conference theme of cultivating a community of lifelong researchers by embedding inquiry and improvement into the practice of preparing new educators.

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90 "Teaching is Much More Than Teaching and Learning, Teachers Prepare Students for Life": Qualitatively Examining Preservice Teachers' Experiences During Service Learning

Dr. Jill Salisbury-Glennon, Dr. Paris Strom, Ms. Amber Johnson, Mr. Kendrick Wallace

Auburn University, Auburn University, AL, USA

Abstract

Review of the Literature

Service learning has been defined as a reciprocal relationship in which both applied field experiences and community service are merged to provide benefits to both the service learners and the community partner(s) (Ryan & Callahan, 2002; as cited in Hildenbrand & Schultz, 2015). The results of prior research into service learning have demonstrated many benefits. For example, Resch and Schrittesser (2023) found that service learning experiences helped learners to connect theory and practice and to solve real-world problems, while LaMaster (2001) and Tinkler, Tinkler, Reyes & Elkin (2019) found that service learning experiences served to motivate learners to enter the profession. Finally, Eyler, Giles, Stensen and Gray (2001) asserted that both the quality and quantity of reflective activities have an impact on the student learning experience.

Objectives

The present study sought to investigate the prevalent themes that emerged from a qualitative analysis of 151 reflective guided service learning journals collected over the course of the last seven semesters.

Methodology

Participants

151 undergraduate Elementary Education majors participated in a total of 3775 hours of service learning. These hours were completed during the Spring and Fall of 2022, Spring and Fall of 2023, Spring and Fall of 2024 and the Spring of 2025. Each participant submitted a reflective service learning journal that was a requirement for an undergraduate Educational Psychology course.

Data Sources

Each service learning journal contained three guided entries. The first two formative journal entries were based on two different visits in the same local elementary school, and were based on the same guided questions. The final journal entry was a summative reflection and participants were given guided questions that asked them to reflect over their entire service learning experience. Data were analyzed using Atlas.ti.

Results

An analysis of prevalent themes from the service learning journals indicated that first, service learners were able to observe how to foster a learning environment that encouraged learning as well as important life skills. For example, one student stated, "*Mrs. X has not only taught them math and science but also manners in the classroom and how to phrase things so we do not hurt other peers' feelings…her students are not only learning the material but are also learning how to be a better person*." Second, several students mentioned the importance of the diversity at this school for their learning. For example, as one student stated, "*I have learned so much regarding diversity and individual differences from my service learning experience. My elementary and high schools were not very diverse and the majority of the students looked like me."* Finally, several service learners expressed that this experience has given them many insights that they could one day use in their own classrooms. For example, one student journaled that *"Through this learning approach, I realized how important it is to determine each child's strengths and weaknesses. This experience taught me that I want to try to always have some sort of one-on-one meeting with my students."* Additional themes will be elucidated.

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120 Exploring the Influence of Administrative Support and Teacher Self-Efficacy in Predicting Teacher Retention Intentions: A National Survey

-- Okunola Odeniyi[1], -- Aubrey Haigwood[1], -- Meredith Powell[1], Dr. David Marshall[1], Dr. Timothy Pressley[2]

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Abstract

Teacher retention remains a pressing issue in K-12 education, with national data indicating that fewer than 24% of teachers reported an intent to stay in the profession during the 2021-2022 school year (Marshall et al., 2022). Existing studies have explored a range of factors that influence teachers' decisions to remain or leave their jobs, such as school-level factors, compensation, and psychological factors (Horng, 2009; Ingersoll et al., 2001; Marshall & Pressley, 2023; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Among these factors, administrative support has consistently emerged as an influential theme (Boyd et al., 2011; Sutcher et al., 2016). Administrative support functions as a critical job resource, helping to buffer the emotional strain associated with the demands of teaching and fostering a more sustainable work environment for teachers (Kraft et al., 2016). Another notable factor that contributes to teacher retention intentions is teacher self-efficacy. Research has shown that frequent shifts in educational policies and constant changes in instructional expectations can undermine teachers' sense of efficacy and increase teacher attrition rates (Marshall et al., 2022; Pressley & Ha, 2021).

While previous research has established that both administrative support and teacher self-efficacy are associated with teacher retention (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Sutcher et al., 2016), there are limited studies that explore how these two factors operate simultaneously within the same model to predict teacher retention intentions and whether these relationships vary based on school type. Grounded in Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory and the Jobs Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001), the study aims to (1) examine the extent to which administrative support and overall teacher self-efficacy predict teachers' retention intentions, (2) identify which self-efficacy domain—instructional strategies, student engagement, or classroom management—best predicts teacher retention, (3) Assess whether the most predictive self-efficacy domain moderates the administrative support-teacher retention relationship, and (4) determine whether school type moderates the administrative support-teacher retention relationship.

A series of regression analyses was conducted using a secondary dataset derived from a national teacher survey administered in 2023. The findings revealed that administrative support significantly and positively predicted teacher retention intentions and accounted for the greatest proportion of variance *(R^2 = .149, β = 0.39, p <.001),* while overall self-efficacy had a significant, yet weaker effect *(R^2 = .049, β = 0.22, p <.001)*. Among the self-efficacy domains, only classroom management significantly predicted retention intentions. However, classroom management efficacy did not moderate the administrative support-teacher retention relationship. Additionally, private school teachers reported significantly lower retention intentions than their public school counterparts, but school type did not alter the effect of administrative support. Overall, the absence of moderation effects suggests that administrative support is a

robust predictor of teacher retention intentions across teacher competency levels and school types.

This study contributes to existing research by identifying two distinct, significant predictors of teacher retention intentions: administrative support and classroom management efficacy. Notably, the findings suggest that these factors influence retention independently rather than interactively, underscoring the need for school leaders to invest in both administrative support and teacher development.

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122 Cultivating Research Skills in Pre-Service Teachers through Fieldwork in Early Childhood

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Abstract

As one of the administrators of the University of West Alabama's Campus School, and a former special education teacher now working in higher education, I've come to deeply appreciate how powerful early fieldwork can be in shaping the next generation of educators. Our on-campus preschool, which serves children from six weeks to four years old, functions as a living laboratory where undergraduate teacher candidates begin to see themselves not just as future teachers, but as reflective practitioners and researchers.

In this poster session, I'll share how we're using our unique setting to help pre-service teachers cultivate a mindset of inquiry. Through hands-on field experiences embedded in early childhood education coursework, our students observe, collect data, reflect, and even conduct small-scale research projects. These aren't just check-the-box placements but meaningful experiences that ask students to slow down, notice details, ask questions, and connect theory to real children and classrooms.

Whether they're completing family activity projects, analyzing developmental checklists, or reflecting on instructional strategies, our teacher candidates are being coached to think like researchers. For many, it's their first time realizing that research isn't reserved for graduate students or faculty, it's something all educators should engage in to be curious, intentional, and reflective in their practice.

The poster will highlight examples of how we support student-led inquiry across several levels of coursework. In introductory classes, students focus on observation, documentation, and developmental awareness. In upper-level courses, they design and

complete mini-inquiry projects or reflections that connect what they're learning in class to what they're seeing in real time with children. I'll include student quotes, sample observation tools, and photos that illustrate how this work unfolds.

As someone who taught special education in Alabama public schools for seven years, I understand the demands today's classrooms place on new teachers. That's why I believe so strongly in preparing them to be flexible, curious, and research minded. Now, in my new role in higher education, I'm excited to help build a program that doesn't just prepare students to teach but prepares them to think critically about their teaching, ask meaningful questions, and stay lifelong learners.

This presentation ties directly to the MSERA 2025 theme of *"Cultivating a Community of Lifelong Researchers."* I hope to show how even the youngest teacher candidates can begin developing this mindset when given the right environment and support. I believe our work at UWA's Campus School is planting the seeds of educational research in a way that is approachable, practical, and deeply meaningful. I'm excited to share what we're learning along the way

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124 The Moderating Role of Academic Performance in the Relationship Between Grit and Procrastination among first year college students

Dr. Les Archer

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Abstract

Introduction

Procrastination appears to be "extremely prevalent" (Steel, 2007, p. 3) and affects 15-20% of adults (Harriott & Ferrari, 1996). Using a meta-analysis, Steel (2007) found this self-regulatory failure (i.e., procrastination) among students, linked to academic underachievement, heightened anxiety, and reduced well-being. Procrastination should be distinguished from simple decision avoidance (Anderson, 2003).

Grit, characterized by sustained effort and passion for long-term goals, has emerged as a promising noncognitive trait associated with educational attainment, GPA among Ivy League undergraduates, and retention among US Army military cadets (Duckworth et al., 2007). Lee and Han (2024) found that academic procrastination behavior had a negative effect at the highest level of academic persistence, and grit was found to have an interactive effect with achievement goal orientation. Yet, grit's effectiveness may depend on contextual factors—such as a student's prior academic performance.

The present study explores whether high school GPA moderates the relationship between grit and procrastination.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does grit predict levels of academic procrastination among first year college students?
2. Does high school GPA moderate the relationship between grit and procrastination?
3. Is the protective effect of grit against procrastination stronger among students with lower GPAs?

Theoretical Grounding

This study is grounded in self-regulation theory, which posits that goal-directed behaviors (like task initiation and sustained effort) are influenced by internal traits and external circumstances. Students with lower academic achievement face more academic challenges and lack structured study routines, making them more reliant on personal perseverance to avoid procrastination. Conversely, high-achieving students may already possess strong self-regulatory behaviors, reducing the marginal impact of grit. Therefore, we hypothesize that the negative relationship between grit and procrastination will be stronger among students with lower GPA.

Methodology

Design

Cross-sectional, correlational study.

Participants

Undergraduate students recruited from general education courses at a regional university.

Measures

- **Grit**: Measured using the 12-item Grit Scale (Duckworth et al., 2007).
- **Procrastination**: Measured using the Procrastination Assessment Scale—Students (PASS).
- **GPA**: Self-reported high school GPA, verified when possible.

Analysis

Data will be analyzed using multiple linear regression. Variables include procrastination (DV), grit (IV), GPA (moderator), and an interaction term between grit and GPA. All continuous variables will be mean-centered prior to computing the interaction.

Preliminary Results

Preliminary findings suggest that the interaction between grit and GPA is statistically significant, indicating a moderation effect.

These results provide insight into how personality and performance interact to influence academic behavior. Findings can inform intervention efforts by identifying which students may benefit most from grit-focused strategies. Future research will examine whether similar moderation effects occur with other academic and psychological outcomes.

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143 Getting Preservice Teachers to Read...for Real!

Ms. Lisa Herrington

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Abstract

In this poster presentation, I will outline how I use a few assignments in my course that surveys child and young adult literature as a means to engage pre-service teachers to either rediscover or find a genuine love of reading. Without a genuine love of reading, they will not be able to appreciate the importance of teaching their students to love reading, as the focus relies mainly on the skill only.

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162 Educational Autonomy and Personal Development Effects on US Homeschool Graduate Outcomes: A Hybrid Review

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Abstract

Background and Significance

Modern homeschooling has grown substantially in the United States since its inception in the 1960s (Gloeckner & Jones, 2013), with increasing emphasis on educational autonomy and personal development as key pedagogical approaches (Dahlquist et al., 2006). However, the long-term effects of these educational philosophies on graduate outcomes remain underexplored. Understanding how educational autonomy and personal development practices influence homeschool graduates' life trajectories is crucial for informing educational policy, supporting homeschooling families, and contributing to broader discussions about alternative education effectiveness.

Problem and Purpose Statement

Though families increasingly opt to homeschool for the purposes of educational autonomy and personal development approaches, research on their long-term effectiveness remains fragmented and understudied. No comprehensive review has systematically examined the connection between these practices and their influence on graduate outcomes. This literature review fills this critical gap by synthesizing existing evidence to inform practice and identify research priorities.

Research Question

What is the nature and extent of research examining how educational autonomy and personal development affect US homeschool graduate outcomes?

Objectives

This scoping/narrative hybrid review aims to:

(1) map existing research on educational autonomy and personal development in homeschooling contexts,

(2) identify patterns in reported graduate outcomes across studies,

(3) analyze methodological approaches used to investigate these relationships, and

(4) identify critical research gaps requiring future investigation.

Methods

Following established scoping review methodology (Tricco et al., 2018), we conducted a comprehensive literature search across academic databases (ERIC, ProQuest, Web of Science), homeschooling organization repositories, and conference proceedings. Our search strategy combined terms for homeschooling, educational autonomy, personal development, and graduate outcomes using Boolean operators. Following the initial search and inclusion/exclusion rounds, a hand search was conducted, drawing from reference lists of included sources, related article searches, and searches of other sources published by included authors.

Data extraction captures study characteristics, autonomy and development measures, graduate outcomes, and methodological quality indicators. Analysis includes quantitative synthesis (frequency distributions, temporal trends) and qualitative thematic analysis of theoretical frameworks and outcome patterns.

Expected Contributions

This review will provide a systematic mapping of research examining educational autonomy and personal development effects on homeschool graduates. Expected outcomes include: identification of dominant theoretical frameworks; documentation of measured graduate outcomes; assessment of methodological strengths and limitations; and articulation of areas for future research.

The findings will inform homeschooling practitioners about evidence-based approaches to educational autonomy and personal development, guide researchers toward understudied areas, and contribute to policy discussions about alternative education effectiveness. By synthesizing existing knowledge, this review will establish a foundation for more targeted empirical investigations and evidence-based practice in homeschooling contexts.

Implications

Results will advance understanding of how educational autonomy and personal development practices influence long-term outcomes, supporting evidence-based decision-making by homeschooling families and informing broader educational theory about learner-centered approaches. This work addresses a significant gap in alternative

education research while contributing to discussions about personalized learning and student agency across educational contexts.

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175 Developing an Artificial Intelligence-Integrated Instructional Model through Collaborative Expertise, Educational Theory, and Generative Artificial Intelligence

Dr. Stephen Marvin[1], Dr. Eric Marvin[2]

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Abstract

As generative artificial intelligence (gen-AI) reshapes the educational landscape, educators are actively exploring whether—and how best—to integrate these tools in ways that are pedagogically sound, ethically responsible, and instructionally meaningful. In response, the researchers developed the CONNECT model—an instructional framework currently under review for publication. Rather than presenting the finalized model, this poster session focuses on the development process behind it.

Drawing on their combined expertise in educational theory, instructional design, K–12 and higher education, and faculty development, the researchers engaged in a collaborative, iterative design process. Informed by a wide variety of instructional and learning theories, the model was refined through cycles of reflection, dialogue, and feedback. Generative AI played a dual role in this process: both as a catalyst for pedagogical innovation and as a tool for brainstorming, analysis, and fine-tuning.

This session traces how the researchers used design thinking, ethical considerations, and practitioner insight to move from real-world instructional needs to a theoretically grounded, acronym-based framework. The poster will highlight the range of educational theories that shaped the model and illustrate how each contributed to its development.

Attendees will gain insight into the research-based, practitioner-informed process of instructional model development. The session invites reflection, conversation, and future collaboration on the design, implementation, and evaluation of instructional frameworks that support thoughtful AI integration across educational settings.

179 From Story to Standards: Using Children's Literature to Enrich Social Studies Instruction

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Abstract

Children's literature serves as a dynamic tool for deepening students' understanding of social studies, helping to make abstract concepts in history, geography, civics, and economics more tangible and engaging. In this project, preservice teachers were provided with a collection of carefully curated children's books aligned to the four strands of social studies.

Through classroom instruction, modeling, and targeted feedback, preservice teachers learned strategies for integrating these texts into standards-based instructional lesson plans, including a focus on inquiry-based learning. Using storytelling, read-aloud techniques, and rich classroom discussion to bring social studies content to life for K-12 students.

This initiative was funded through a grant provided by the Alabama Reading Initiative, fostering a partnership between higher education and K-12 reading across the content areas, empowering future educators with practical tools to design meaningful, literature-rich social studies experiences. Professors from the University of Mobile and the University of South Alabama collaborated for this project to impact the maximum number of preservice students.

223 Evaluating Student Growth in STEM Through RET-Funded Summer Camps

Dr. Chih-hsuan Wang, Ms. Hannah Hong, Ms. Kailea Manning, Dr. Melody Russell, Dr. Daniela Marghitu, Dr. Xiaowen Gong, Dr. Thaddeus Roppel

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Abstract

Introduction

Among various teaching approaches in STEM education, Project-Based Learning (PBL) is one of the most effective methods (Akgun, 2013). PBL engages students in hands-on, real-world experiences where they construct knowledge through exploration,

experimentation, and reflection. This approach increases student engagement and helps students connect theoretical concepts to practical applications (Larmer et al., 2015), fostering a better understanding of STEM content and concepts (Kingston, 2018). In addition, the open-ended and iterative nature of PBL can sharpen critical thinking skills (Rehman et al., 2024; Maspul, 2024), as students analyze information, evaluate evidence, solve complex problems, and revise their solutions or designs. PBL is also centered on collaborative learning, where students work together to solve problems and share results (Almulla, 2020). Moreover, several studies have shown that project-based learning directly improves students' self-efficacy in STEM (Jamali et al., 2020; Spigner, 2023). Furthermore, PBL positively influences students' attitudes towards STEM. Research reports that PBL increases interest in STEM careers and encourages students to recognize the importance of STEM in science and engineering disciplines (Tseng et al., 2011; Admawati et al., 2018).

This project was funded by the NSF Research Experiences for Teachers (RET) in Engineering and Computer Science. Participating teachers developed PBL curricular modules based on robotics and ML/AI, which were then implemented in student summer camps. This proposal aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the modules by examining students' STEM knowledge, self-efficacy, peer learning, critical thinking, and engineering attitudes across three camps over the project period.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

A total of 56 middle school students participated in three one-week summer camps in 2022-2024, with 60.4% being males. Demographic information is presented in Table 1. All students completed the pre-survey at the beginning and the post-survey at the end of the summer camp.

Instruments

Student surveys included a summer camp content knowledge scale developed by the research team, selected subscales from the Motivational Strategies and Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ, Pintrich et al., 1991), including self-efficacy, critical thinking, and peer learning, and the engineering attitude subscale from the Student Attitudes toward Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (S-STEM, Unfried et al., 2015). Cronbach's alpha values ranged from .70 to .94, demonstrating acceptable to strong reliability.

Results

Data were analyzed using SPSS 30. A series of paired samples t-tests were used to examine the changes in students' summer camp content knowledge scores, as well as their responses to self-efficacy, critical thinking, peer learning, and engineering attitude subscales. Results indicated that students' content knowledge scores were significantly improved from pre- to post-survey, p=.004. Additionally, their levels of self-efficacy, critical thinking, and engineering attitudes significantly increased after the summer camp, ps<.05. On the other hand, their abilities to collaborate with their peers was not significant (see Table 2).

Conclusion

The results support that the PBL curricular modules developed and implemented by RET teachers effectively improved students' STEM knowledge scores, as well as levels of self-efficacy, critical thinking, and attitudes toward engineering. These findings highlight the value of utilizing PBL learning methods in STEM education.

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224 Addressing Selective Mutism Through Gradual Exposure and Communication Supports

Ms. Mary Grace Shoemaker, Ms. Anna Grace Ashurst, Dr. Kayla Bates-Brantley, Dr. Mark Wildmon

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Abstract

Selective Mutism (SM) is an anxiety-based disorder characterized by a child's consistent failure to speak in specific social settings where speaking is expected, despite speaking in other settings. Typically emerging in early childhood, SM often causes significant impairment in academic, social, and emotional development, especially in school settings (APA, 2013). This study explores intervention efforts with identical twin girls in first grade who were diagnosed with SM and exhibited nearly complete verbal withdrawal in school environments. At the time of referral, both students had stopped speaking to anyone outside of their immediate family since the age of two. Despite being capable of fluent speech at home, they remained nonverbal at school, not participating in class discussions, not raising their hands, and not engaging in classroom activities, even those that were enjoyable. They required substantial

accommodations to meet academic milestones, including having their mother assist with reading fluency assessments to pass kindergarten.

The intervention was conducted by two graduate students in a school psychology program, who began by collecting baseline data through three days of direct observation in various school environments — the classroom, gym, and playground. It was observed that while the girls were silent in classroom settings, they began to speak softly to peers during less structured times, such as on the playground, particularly when adults were not visibly present. This signaled that their mutism was not a lack of skill but likely related to performance anxiety in the presence of authority figures. The first intervention phase involved structured pull-out sessions where both twins participated in a low-pressure craft activity. To promote communication, a communication board with visual icons was used, allowing them to request necessary materials by pointing to pictures. This strategy allowed the twins to engage meaningfully without pressure to speak immediately. Sessions resulted in an increase in communicative behavior. The intervention was then expanded to address academic communication needs. The next phase targeted academic mands (e.g., asking for help with unfamiliar words). Students were taught to raise their hands and point to passages when they needed support, rather than initiating verbal requests. To reduce the cognitive demand and performance anxiety, researchers introduced ChatGPT-generated preferred-topic reading passages.

In later sessions, the communication board was introduced into the classroom to support generalization. Observations indicated a significant increase in in-class mands, showing transfer of skills from the pull-out to the natural environment. Both students began using gestures and whispered speech near researchers, though not directly to them. Notably, they also began to talk with peers within the researchers' proximity, a key marker of progress. In conclusion, this case study demonstrates that a structured, multi-component intervention involving gradual exposure, visual communication supports, personalized content, and family-school collaboration can yield significant improvements in selective mutism. Practical implications include the importance of understanding student-specific triggers, using low-pressure tasks to build rapport, and tailoring content to student interests to encourage speech.

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232 Artificial Intelligence and the Graduate Writing Center

Dr. Elizabeth Anne Murray

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly becoming a steady presence in the world, and the educational landscape is no exception. With new tools arriving daily, students are faced

with an ongoing temptation to let AI do the hard work for them. Getting ahead of the technology is likely impossible. Thus, educators are tasked with the challenge of helping students learn to use AI appropriately without sacrificing integrity or neglecting the consideration of the ethics associated with artificial intelligence. In this presentation, I share the journey of developing a self-paced learning module exploring artificial intelligence in an educational doctorate program.

Launched in 2018, the Educational Doctorate in Learning and Organizational Change (EdD-LOC) at Baylor University has become one of the most rapidly growing and diverse graduate programs at the university. Designed for scholar practitioners, the EdD-LOC met a need for a terminal degree offering coursework in research methods and principles of learning. Housed within the Online Learning Unit in the School of Education, the students in the EdD-LOC come from industries within and beyond education including: local government, the military, oil and gas, non-profits, athletics, food and beverage, and performing and fine arts. The students arrive in the program with advanced degrees, senior leadership experience, and expansive discourses particular to their areas of expertise. While their professions are diverse, their needs as graduate learners and academic writers are quite similar.

Foundational to the success of the EdD-LOC (CPED 2022 Program of the Year) is the Research and Writing Development Center (RWDC), a resource available specifically for the EdD-LOC students. The RWDC fulfills the duties of a typical graduate writing center, (e.g. formatting, organization, grammar), but also assists students with their Problem of Practice dissertation research through consultations, document reviews, and dissertation committee service. One additional component of the RWDC is an extensive self-paced writing course available to students at any point during their time in the program. Module lesson topics in the course include: writing with a purpose, using the Baylor library resources, APA, and avoiding plagiarism. Within these modules are videos, articles, links to resources, and countless lessons on academic writing. The RWDC keeps a focus on offering illustrative, but not exhaustive feedback to students—the goal is to equip students with knowledge and skills to necessary to learn how to identify their own writing needs and then address them.

With the advance of generative artificial intelligence writing tools, students have an attractive “shortcut” that a few short years ago would have seemed possible only in science fiction. Recognizing the need to balance the importance of lifelong learning and critical thought with the expectation and appeal of AI efficiency, the RWDC team developed a new writing module. Guided by three principles—center the human, maintain transparency, and safeguard data—and rooted in the understanding that artificial intelligence will never be a substitute for human practical wisdom, the AI module works to equip students with a basic understanding of how to generate prompts, evaluate outputs, and consider the ethical implications of AI.

250 The [XXX] Project: Training 6-12 Grade [YYY] Teachers for Computer Science Endorsement by Passing the 5652 CS Praxis Exam

Ms. Marissa Muldoon, Ms. Asuman Sekeroglu, Dr. Bonnie Achee, Dr. Ellen Caillouet, Ms. Christine Terranova, Dr. Ghassan Alkadi, Dr. Paula Calderon

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Abstract

In 2022, [YYY] initiated the Computer Science Education Act (541) to increase computer science education in the K-12 classroom by integrating K-12 [YYY] Student Standards for Computer Science into existing coursework and the introduction of new courses, with expected implementation by the 2027-2028 school year. To meet this need, a greater number of certified computer science educators are needed. In 2023, the [XXX] Project was created to address this gap, training certified public and charter school 6-12 grade teachers to receive computer science endorsement by passing the 5652 Computer Science Praxis test.

During the first year of [XXX] (2023-2024 school year), 797 teachers participated from 56 [YYY] parishes, with 374 teachers completing the program, 73 taking the Praxis, and 39 passing as of June 2025. Teachers who completed the program were awarded a $350 stipend. In the second year of [XXX] (2024-2025 school year), 272 teachers (280 capacity) participated from 51 [YYY] parishes, with 122 teachers completing the program, 8 taking the Praxis, and 6 passing as of June 2025. Completing teachers received a voucher to take the 5652 CS Praxis once free.

The [XXX] Project consists of three delivery modes: self-paced 8-week asynchronous online, 16-week synchronous with weekly virtual meetings, and 4-day intensive face-to-face course. This past year, the [XXX] Project added an 8-hour virtual review session for all previous participants and held an all day training at the 2025 Teacher Leader Summit (TLS) New Orleans conference with 77 people participating overall. Each 40-hour cohort covers the five categories of the 5652 Praxis Exam: Impacts of Computers, Algorithms and Computational Thinking, Programming, Data, and Computing Systems and Networks, culminating in a practice exam mimicking the actual exam (100 multiple choice questions with a 3 hour time limit).

Initial findings indicate a predictive relationship between [XXX] practice exam scores and achieving the state required Praxis score of 149 to obtain endorsement, as well as the program increasing teacher readiness and self-efficacy to teach computer science. Additional areas of investigation are guided by the following questions: What factors impact teachers' completion and attrition rates throughout the 40-hour course? Do completion rates vary based on teacher characteristics, such as years of experience and background CS knowledge? To what extent do teachers who are unsuccessful on the first Praxis attempt enroll in a refresher course and retake the CS exam within the study period?

Plans are underway for a third year of [XXX] with three 40-hour cohort options and an 8-hour virtual review session, as well as organizing and supporting local Communities of Practice of teachers around the state. The [XXX] Project supports teachers new to the [XXX] Project as well as previous participants.

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19 Recruitment and Retention of Black Male Teacher Candidates at Predominately White Institutions

Mr. Cyril Paul Robertson, Dr. Earlisha Whitfield

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Abstract

With a little under 2% of educators identifying as Black males in the United States, educational preparatory institutions (EPIs) at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) work to recruit quality educators to then serve as in-service teachers. With a nation-wide teacher shortage, attracting current college students to the teaching profession is crucial to fill anticipated job vacancies in the K-12 sector. This research examines the Black male teacher candidate subset as they progress through their post-secondary journey in a state-approved EPI program at PWIs. Through a mixed-method approach, this research focuses on respondents' testimonies in teacher mentorship programs such as CALL ME MiSTER® and the Black Male Educator Alliance (BMEA), as well as data regarding recruitment efforts and outreach to local high schools and state/community colleges for prospective students. In addition, the research in question also focuses on retention of Black male teacher candidates, through the duration of their time in an EPI program, student teaching, and in-service teaching roles.

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34 Rags to Resilience: How Childhood Adversity Inspires Education, Success, and Leadership?

Ms. Jocelyn Johnson

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Abstract

Many high-achieving adults, including college graduates, business owners, and community leaders, come from diverse backgrounds shaped by hardship. These early experiences, known as Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Research studies have identified ACEs as emotional or physical abuse, neglect, growing up in single-parent homes, and exposure to issues like addiction, incarceration, or poverty (Sciaraffa,

2017). While ACEs are often linked to long-term challenges, they can also create a strong resilience to break cycles and succeed. *Rags to Resilience* is used in this research to connect how ACEs can lead to a positive outcome.

The purpose of this research is to explore how people who experience trauma and hardship in childhood use those experiences as motivation to change their lives. It will focus on how adversity leads to the pursuit of education, entrepreneurship, and leadership, demonstrating how negative beginnings can yield positive and powerful outcomes.

The need for individuals who have experienced trauma will sometimes become the motivation to develop strong resilience for the success of life. These individuals often push themselves to go to college, build careers, become financially stable, and take on leadership roles. Their past struggles become an impetus to work harder, stay focused, and build better futures not just for themselves, but often for others, too. ACE is an important term that has been used in the K-12 schools for the past few years, but few research studies have looked at how resiliency is developed from ACE experiences (Crouch et al., 2019). This research aims to understand how adversity in childhood can lead to ambition, responsibility, and resilience in adulthood.

Prior research shows that people who grow up with trauma are not defined by their past; they are often shaped by it in ways that make them strong, driven, and capable of leading others. It offers a new perspective on adversity, focusing on how tough beginnings can produce ambitious and resilient individuals. Findings from this research can help educators, employers, and community leaders recognize the hidden strengths of individuals who have overcome obstacles.

This research is expected to demonstrate that many resilient adults utilized their past as a catalyst for growth. They may have experienced instability, but they learned responsibility at an early age. They may have lacked support, but they built self-reliance. Their stories will highlight how hardship leads to ambition, leadership, and long-term success.

Rags to Resilience challenges the belief that trauma leads only to struggle. For many, early adversity becomes a source of power and purpose. This research will highlight how individuals can rise from difficult beginnings to achieve higher education, build careers, and lead others, turning pain into progress.

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69 Differences in Purpose in Emerging Adults based on Gender

Mr. Elisha Lawrence

University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

Purpose has been studied for its potential to enhance well-being in individuals across the lifespan. “Purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of consequence to the world beyond the self” (Damon et al., 2003, p. 121). Purpose has positive effects on decreasing stress levels, enhancing a sense of belonging, and deeper engagement (Hill et al., 2018; Diekman et al., 2024; Hudig et al., 2021; Yeager et al., 2014). Emerging adult students enter college amid a period of identity exploration (Arnett, 2015). Purpose provides a stabilizing force for identity when these long-term intentions are internalized (Damon et al., 2003). Three important aspects of these intentions are that they are personally meaningful, enduring long-term goals, and others-focused (Damon et al., 2003). Few purpose studies focus on the period of emerging adulthood, but studies with adults note that women often have higher purpose than men (Themudo, 2009; Xi et al, 2018). Research expanding with emerging adults examines how early these differences in purpose appear. The research question was “What are the differences in subtypes of purpose (meaning, goal orientation, and beyond-the-self dimension) by gender?”

The social heuristics hypothesis proposes that people will continue or extinguish behaviors based on how successful they deem these behaviors in daily life. Stereotypical gender roles that press women into more helping roles and men into competitive, assertive roles could become automatized (Rand et al., 2016). Participants were from a purposive convenience sample of 274 undergraduate students at two mid-South United States universities. A One-Way MANOVA with SPSS was conducted to examine whether purpose differences existed according to gender. The Stanford Purpose Assessment (Malin et al., 2018) subscales (Meaning, Goal Orientation, and

Beyond-the-Self) were the dependent variables (DVs), and gender was the independent variable. Bivariate correlations were examined to verify an appropriate level of correlation between the DVs according to gender. A Discriminant Analysis was conducted to examine where specific differences in purpose existed according to gender. Results revealed that women were significantly more likely to possess the beyond-the-self and meaning dimensions of purpose than men. These results fit with the social heuristics hypothesis that women are socialized to be caretakers, resulting in higher levels of altruism. The positive aspect of this is that caring for others is associated with greater life satisfaction (Xi et al., 2018). However, care should be taken that women are not pressed into stereotypical roles.

The finding that women have higher levels of meaning in life than men is interesting. Bronk describes the meaning dimension as "evidenced by an individual's commitment of time, energy, and resources toward its pursuit" (2018, p. 2). This could suggest that women display greater passion than men for things they find personally meaningful. Overall, it is concerning that men display less purpose because of its association with greater life satisfaction and length of life (Xi et al., 2018). Future interventions of purpose should consider gender gaps with specific interventions aimed at young men to alleviate purpose deficits.

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100 Infusing Character Education into Higher Education Curriculum: A Case Study from the University of West Alabama

Dr. Celeste Wheat, Dr. Jan Miller

University of West Alabama, Livingston, AL, USA

Abstract

In August 2022, the University of West Alabama (UWA) launched *Project Grow*, a character education initiative funded by the Kern Family Foundation. The project's central aim is to develop virtuous education practitioners by embedding the dispositions of professionalism, ethics, diversity, collaboration, and reflection into educator preparation programs. This initiative supports the intentional integration of character education across multiple College of Education programs, including Instructional Leadership, Teacher Leader, Counseling, Library Media, Special Education, and Rural Education. Most recently, *Project Grow* has expanded to include UWA's Student Affairs in Higher Education (SAHE) graduate program, providing a unique opportunity to study character education implementation in both K–12 and higher education contexts.

This poster session will provide a concise, high-level overview of the strategies and best practices used by UWA faculty to conduct a collaborative, mission-aligned curriculum

revision process. Emphasizing faculty leadership and cross-program collaboration, *Project Grow* has focused on aligning program learning outcomes, course content, and assessments with virtuous learning objectives. The poster will outline key steps of the curriculum redesign process and the tools used to guide revision—such as curriculum mapping templates, faculty development workshops, and disposition-aligned reflection prompts.

The session will feature a focused case study of how character education has been intentionally infused into the SAHE program. In particular, the revised curriculum emphasizes virtues such as integrity, responsibility, empathy, and respect within core content areas including student development theory, ethical decision-making, and diversity and inclusion. Through this example, attendees will see how character education can support holistic student development in graduate-level preparation programs, especially those preparing student affairs professionals to serve diverse campus communities.

To increase interactivity, participants will receive sample materials and a curriculum revision template that they can use to brainstorm or initiate similar efforts within their own institutions. Guiding questions will prompt attendees to consider how their current programs already reflect virtuous learning, and where they might deepen or expand this focus. The session will also highlight how character education aligns with accreditation standards and professional competencies in both educator and student affairs preparation.

This poster session is relevant for higher education faculty, curriculum designers, academic leaders, and researchers interested in enhancing teaching and learning through values-driven education. It contributes to broader conversations on preparing graduates who not only master content, but also model the character and ethics essential to professional and civic life.

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115 From Breathing to Writing: Incorporating Mindfulness into the English Language Arts Classroom

Ms. Gabrielle Vogt[1,2], Ms. Lacey Stribling[1,2]

[1]University of Mississippi, Oxford, MS, USA. [2]Oxford Middle School, Oxford, MS, USA

Abstract

The researchers chose to explore the integration of mindfulness into middle school English Language Arts classrooms, with a focus on both general education and special education students. The impetus for this research came from the personal experiences

of the researchers, who after adopting mindfulness practices, observed transformative benefits in themselves and their students.

In this study, mindfulness, which can be defined as the intentional cultivation of present-moment awareness, was introduced systemically in a seventh grade English Language Arts inclusion classroom through “Mindful Mondays,” where writing sessions began with a meditation. Classroom transitions were implemented with the use of a singing bowl. Over the course of eighteen weeks, students’ writing output more than doubled during their journal writing, and qualitative data indicated increased enjoyment and positive classroom experiences. The results of this study suggests a strong correlation between mindfulness and improved writing fluency, self-efficacy, and student well-being.

A review of scholarly literature supports this research. Studies show that mindfulness-based interventions (MBIs) in adolescent populations enhance self-regulation, resilience, and academic performance, while reducing symptoms of anxiety and ADHD. For example, Cordeiro et al. (2022) found that mindful acceptance predicts higher writing achievement in sixth graders, and Sultan et al. (2025) documented the positive impact of mindfulness on attention and behavior in students with ADHD. Furthermore, journal writing itself, especially when paired with peer feedback and creative prompts, has been shown to improve students’ writing attitudes, performance, and self-confidence (Arman, 2021). *Happy Teachers Change the World* by the father of mindfulness, Thich Nhat Hahn, and Katherine Waere (2017) emphasizes the importance of a gradual, scaffolded approach when teaching mindfulness to adolescents. Students must first learn to breathe mindfully before successfully incorporating more advanced meditations.

Implementing mindfulness in P-12 settings does present challenges, including perceptions, the need for secular framing, and the emphasis on standardized testing. Teachers must also maintain their own mindfulness practice to serve as authentic models for students. Despite such challenges, the evidence from this study suggests that combining mindfulness with journal writing can decrease students’ anxiety and negative emotions towards writing, while enhancing focus, confidence, and the overall quality of their work.

Despite promising findings, there is a gap in the literature directly linking mindfulness interventions to improvements in writing, particularly in the secondary classroom. While the majority of studies focus on broader outcomes such as emotional regulation and academic engagement, the researchers hope their study leads to further research and

experimentation in secondary classrooms to establish a direct causal relationship between mindfulness practices and writing outcomes, particularly with secondary students. The ultimate goal of the researchers is to develop evidence-based, inclusive strategies that foster both academic success and emotional well-being for all students.

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169 Exploring the "Figured Worlds" of Characters: Using Discourse Analysis in K-12 Classrooms.

Ms. Kali Kirby, Dr. Patricia Elmore

Athens State University, Athens, AL, USA

Abstract

This poster demonstrates how K-12 teachers can utilize discourse analysis of character dialogue in animated films to teach students about characterization. Specifically, learning about figured worlds helps students see how dialogue reveals the socially and culturally constructed beliefs that characters have concerning how the world works and how individuals should behave, what is normal/abnormal, and what actions are acceptable. I use two animated films as examples in this poster: *Brave* (2012) and *Mulan* (1998). Using discourse analysis, this poster examines the language of four central characters: Mulan, Chi-Fu, Meida, and Elinor. Through qualitative analysis of the film transcripts and highlighted dialogue, recurring figured worlds emerged, including: 1) a woman's purpose is to please a man, 2) a woman is responsible for a family's honor, 3) personal feelings must be sacrificed to appease others, and 4) sometimes traditions must be broken to achieve autonomy. These themes are both historical and ongoing gender expectations across cultural contexts. My findings demonstrate how animated films serve as a lens for looking at social norms and values, particularly in the portrayal of female agency and resistance to traditional expectations. Fiction is a safe place to explore these issues, and my poster argues that this kind of discourse analysis can be done in K-12 classrooms, creating deeper learning opportunities for students.

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217 From Act to Action: Forging a Pathway for Secondary Computer Science Teachers in [XXX]

Dr. Bonnie Achee, Dr. Lindsey "Ellen" Caillouet, Dr. Paula Calderon, Ms. Asuman Sekeroglu

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, Louisiana, USA

Abstract

In response to [XXX] 2022 Computer Science Education Act (Act 541) and the subsequent state vision to increase digital literacy for all students, there is a critical need to prepare a new generation of teacher candidates with the necessary computer science (CS) knowledge, pedagogical skills, and credentials. This poster presents a proposed alternative certification pathway developed by the team from [XXX] as part of a national consortium of 10 states participating in the [XXX] project. The project, in its first year, focused on building capacity for CS in preservice education through collaborative vision-casting and strategic development.

Our proposed model addresses the unique challenges of attracting and certifying new CS teachers in [XXX]. The state's current policy allows in-service teachers to add a CS certification by passing the Praxis #5652 content exam. Building upon this, we have designed a two-phase pathway to attract career-changers—individuals with a bachelor's degree in a field other than education—into the teaching profession. The first phase, "[XXX]," is a professional development program created in partnership with the [XXX] Department of Education, providing targeted training to help candidates pass the CS Praxis #5652 exam.

Once candidates successfully pass the content exam, they are eligible to apply for the second phase of the pathway at [XXX] University. This phase offers a choice between the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) or a Certification-Only program, where they will acquire essential pedagogical knowledge, complete residency requirements, and pass the Praxis Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) exam. This innovative, two-part model is designed to streamline the certification process by first validating subject-matter expertise, then building a strong foundation in instructional practice. The program aims to create a robust and sustainable pipeline of highly-qualified CS teachers, demonstrating a scalable approach to a pressing national need in computer science education.

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231 Collaborative Investment, Measurable Growth: Reflections From A Support Role in the Summer STEM Academy Journey (2019–2024)

Ms. Carla Elston

Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA

Abstract

This abstract presents an evaluative overview of a multi-year academic intervention led by Auburn University's Office of Special Projects and Initiatives, implemented across three rural counties in a southeastern U.S. state. The Summer STEM Academy aimed to reduce academic disparities in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (STEM), and English among high school students in under-resourced communities.

The program used pre- and post-assessments to measure student progress across content areas and grade levels from 2019 through 2024. Supplementary data collection included participant surveys and instructor observations to gauge engagement and instructional impact.

In 2019, student scores improved by 21 percentage points (from 48% to 69%). In 2020, during the virtual academy, average scores rose by 23 points, with 9th–10th grade math and science showing gains of over 30 points. The 2021 Academy saw average increases from 53% to 74%, including a 32-point gain in math and a 16-point gain in science. In 2022, the most substantial improvement occurred with a 43-point gain in average scores; math rose from 39% to 72% and science from 50% to 86%. In 2023, English performance improved from 69% to 86%, with math and science maintaining upward trends. Although 2024 presented challenges related to pandemic learning loss, students still achieved post-test gains equivalent to at least one letter grade.

The findings highlight the effectiveness of sustained, community-based academic programming. Results demonstrate consistent academic gains across disciplines, increased student confidence, and greater engagement in core subjects. The program's success points to the importance of cross-sector collaboration, targeted instructional strategies, and equitable access to enrichment opportunities in closing academic achievement gaps.

Symposium - Ethical Considerations of Using AI in College Coursework in Education Preparation Programs

16:00 - 16:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Erin Klash

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229 Ethical Considerations of Using AI in College Coursework in Educator Preparation Programs

Dr. Erin Klash, Dr. Timothy Lewis

Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, Alabama, USA

Abstract

Faculty in educator preparation programs nationwide are currently navigating how artificial intelligence (AI) is used both in coursework and out. Ethical considerations are significant for both faculty and student use of AI, leaving many questions on both sides of the aisle. One of the greatest concerns with the use of AI in coursework is cheating: does it constitute cheating if students use an AI to assist in completing coursework? First, according to Gorichanaz (2023) cheating is "a category of behavior in which students get academic credit in a dishonest or deceptive way" (p. 185). This could include getting unauthorized help from others, purchasing a paper from an "essay mill," or unauthorized use of AI to complete a course assignment. Huang, Hash, Cummings, and Prena (2025) found that many students believe intention in using AI to complete coursework is key. Cavazos, Hauck, Baskin, and Bain (2025) found that students use AI such as ChatGPT because it offers "value and convenience," and are not often motivated by the idea that they could "beat the system," but 75% of students also reported engaging in "academic misconduct" (p. 365). In a study published by Stone (2024), 40% of participants reported cheating in some way using AI in coursework, but 75% of participants said it was morally unacceptable to cheat if a professor explicitly banned the use of AI for completing coursework. He also found that professors who incorporate the use of AI were more likely to experience students cheating through inappropriate use of AI. Playfoot, Quigley, and Thomas (2024) examined factors that contributed to students' likelihood to use AI, specifically ChatGPT, to complete coursework through cheating means and found that apathy towards earning a degree is the strongest predictor of a student's willingness to cheat to complete. A tremendous issue we must address in higher education as a result of AI is defining what constitutes cheating. Gorichanaz (2023) noted that there are many questions and challenges associated with defining cheating in the age of AI – self-plagiarism, using AI to rephrase your own work, or the inconsistency in faculty policy on the use of AI.

While faculty in higher education are addressing concerns associated with students' use of AI in coursework, the concern is further convoluted by the trend that many faculty are being encouraged to and are actively using AI to assist in their own teaching and research (Cacho, 2024). The purpose of this discussion is to facilitate dialog regarding views on academic integrity for both students and faculty regarding the use of AI in coursework and research. This discussion will address the following questions:

- In your view, what are acceptable uses of AI in your coursework and research (faculty and/or students)?
- How can higher education help in defining the use of AI in a way that maintains academic integrity in research, writing, and assessment?
- How can course instructors in higher education ensure that students can apply skills associated with major area of study, with prevalent student use of AI in assignments?

Discussion/Paper Lecture - SEL, Social Motivation & Cultural Contexts

16:00 - 16:50 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Charlotte Parham

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68 Examining Equity in SEL Standards in Southern States with High Poverty, Under-Resourced School Districts

Dr. Daphne Smith[1], Ms. Jessica Hardy[2], Ms. Brittany Williams[2], Mr. Landry Tullo[2]

[1]Delta State University, Clevelan, MS, USA. [2]Delta State University, Cleveland, MS, USA

Abstract

This study investigates the extent to which social and emotional learning (SEL) standards in Mississippi and Tennessee reflect CASEL's equity-centered framework. SEL has gained widespread recognition as a strategy for enhancing student development, academic success, and emotional well-being, particularly among students in marginalized communities. As state education agencies adopt SEL policies and guidance documents, it becomes increasingly important to understand how these standards support, or fail to support, equity in practice. This is especially critical in rural, high-poverty regions such as those found throughout Mississippi and Tennessee, where educational access is shaped by economic, geographic, and historical inequities.

Although SEL is promoted as a means to advance equity, prior research suggests that when equity is not explicitly embedded in policy frameworks, SEL may inadvertently reinforce dominant cultural norms and exclude students whose lived experiences differ from those norms (Jagers, Rivas-Drake, & Williams, 2019). When SEL focuses narrowly on behavior management rather than identity, agency, and justice, it risks failing the very populations it is intended to support. Despite increasing attention to SEL in state policy, it remains unclear whether and how these frameworks align with CASEL's recent equity commitments, particularly in states serving rural and historically underserved communities. Existing studies rarely examine SEL standards at the policy level or disaggregate findings by geography or socioeconomic context, revealing a critical gap in the literature (Miranda & Rodriguez, 2022).

This study addresses that gap by asking: How do SEL standards in states with rural, under-resourced, and high-poverty districts reflect CASEL's equity focus, or fail to? To guide the analysis, CASEL's equity-centered SEL framework was used as a sensitizing concept (Charmaz, 2006), focusing on four commitments: affirming identity, building agency, addressing injustice, and supporting adult reflection and development. This

lens allowed for an examination of equity indicators both explicitly stated and implicitly embedded within the standards.

The study employed a two-phase qualitative methodology to examine Mississippi and Tennessee SEL standards. First, qualitative document analysis (Bowen, 2009) was used to analyze the structure, language, and priorities found in the SEL standards of both states. Memoing and iterative reading helped identify how equity, inclusion, and cultural responsiveness were emphasized—or omitted. This was followed by thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step model, with both deductive codes (drawn from CASEL's framework) and inductive codes (emerging from the documents themselves). Themes were refined through peer debriefing and synthesized across both within-state and cross-state comparisons.

Findings indicate that while both Mississippi and Tennessee align structurally with CASEL's five core SEL competencies, neither fully integrates the equity-centered vision CASEL advocates. Tennessee embeds trauma-informed care, civic responsibility, and cultural awareness in select domains, particularly social awareness and responsible decision-making, and includes adult SEL development indicators across grade bands. However, it does not fully operationalize equity across all domains, and implementation guidance remains generalized rather than tailored for rural or high-poverty contexts. Mississippi introduces equity in its opening narrative and assigns roles such as "Equity Monitor" in its implementation teams, but these concepts are not reflected in the performance standards or embedded strategies. Neither state directly addresses how SEL should be adapted for implementation in rural, under-resourced schools, leaving a significant gap in localized guidance.

These findings suggest that while the foundational SEL structures are in place, a policy-practice disconnect persists. For SEL to meaningfully advance equity, state standards must move beyond technical alignment and incorporate systemic awareness, cultural relevance, and implementation supports tailored to the communities they serve. This study contributes to the ongoing effort to ensure that SEL policies are not only inclusive in intent but also effective in practice, especially for the students who need them most.

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84 From Screen to School: Using Popular Media to Prepare Equity-Focused Teacher Leaders

Dr. Charlotte Parham, Dr. Donna Wake

University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

This reflective practice study explores how animated films can serve as powerful pedagogical tools for equity-focused professional development among K–12 teacher leaders and administrators. Grounded in critical race media literacy and transformative leadership theory, the study examines how two animated films (i.e., Zootopia (2016) and Elemental (2023) were used to facilitate courageous conversations about race, bias, privilege, and systemic inequities in two racially and economically distinct school districts in the southeastern United States.

Twenty teacher leaders participated in a six-session professional development series, two of which centered on film-based activities designed to create “brave spaces” for dialogue. These sessions incorporated full-length viewings, targeted scene analyses, small and large group discussions, and application exercises that invited participants to connect film metaphors to their professional roles and local school contexts. Data sources included facilitator reflection journals, planning documents, and observational field notes.

Findings highlight four key themes: (1) Animated films provided metaphorical distance that reduced defensiveness and encouraged open engagement with difficult topics; (2) Shared viewing experiences created a common vocabulary that enabled cross-racial dialogue and reduced the explanatory burden on educators of color; (3) Participant engagement varied by district context, with more scaffolded support needed in predominantly White settings and more immediate systemic application in majority-Black settings; and (4) The approach led to transfer of practice, with participants adapting film-based strategies for use in their own schools.

This study contributes to the literature on critical pedagogy and equity leadership by offering an accessible, replicable model for professional learning. It demonstrates how popular media can engage both cognitive and affective domains, helping educators develop the skills and dispositions necessary to lead meaningful equity work in K–12 settings.

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211 Moral Disengagement Among Adolescents: A Cross-Cultural Comparison

Dr. Sally Zengaro, Dr. Franco Zengaro

Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, AL, USA

Abstract

The purpose of this non-experimental empirical study was to investigate the role social context plays in moral development using a convenience sample of adolescents and emerging adults who participated in this study. The theoretical framework for this research was Bandura’s theory of moral disengagement (1991). Social or cultural context is an important component of moral development. Therefore, this cross-cultural

research examined to what extent age and social context predicted moral development among middle and older adolescents in two countries. There were 440 participants in this study from the United States (N=126) and Italy (N=340) ranging in age from 13 to 18+ years of age. Data collection began after IRB approval was granted, and participants responded to Bandura's moral disengagement questionnaire. Results indicated that age and social context predicted the criterion variable of moral disengagement (F (2, 438) = 25.751, p < .001). The $R2$ for the overall model was 32.4% with an adjusted $R2$ of 10.5%. Therefore, approximately 11% of the variability in moral disengagement can be explained by age and social context. Both age and social context were found to be significant individual predictors of moral disengagement, Age: β = -2.783, t = 1.207, p = 0.022; Social Context: β = 7.69, t = 4.146, p < 0.001. There was also a significant difference in moral disengagement between participants in the United States (M=68.478, SD=16.563) and in Italy (M=84.263, SD=20.772), p < .001. This research underscores the importance of social context in the moral development of individuals.

University Student-First Time Attendee Social

17:00 - 18:30 Wednesday, 5th November, 2025
7th Floor E-LOUNGE

All *University Students* and *First Time* MSERA Meeting Attendees are Invited to Attend.

Registration

08:00 - 16:00 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOYER

Pick Up Registration Packet and Conference Materials

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Higher Education

08:00 - 08:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Yan Dai

56 Understanding Instructors: Preparing Community College Educators for Neurodivergent Inclusive Teaching and Support

Dr. Larry Arant, Dr. Christy Hornsby

Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches, La, USA

Abstract

This qualitative study uses a semi-structured interview process as well as a flexible approach to gathering information in order to explore how community college educators perceive and experience supporting neurodivergent students—specifically those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)—in the postsecondary classroom. The purpose of this research is to gain firsthand insight into the experiences, challenges, and strategies of community college instructors who teach students who have self-reported or been diagnosed with ASD and/or ADHD. By participating in this study, instructors' opportunity to have their voices heard with the hopes of making higher education easier to navigate and increasing their postsecondary success. Currently, the goal of full inclusion is not being met in postsecondary education, as community college instructors are not adequately being prepared to meet the academic needs of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and/or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) students.

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145 The Power of Connection: How Faculty Interactions Shape Black Students' Sense of Belonging at Private Liberal Arts Institutions

Dr. Da'Ja'Nay Askew

Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, USA

Abstract

Black students at private liberal arts institutions often navigate challenges to belonging due to underrepresentation, institutional culture, and systemic inequities within predominantly White academic spaces. This quantitative study examines the relationship between faculty-student interactions and Black students' sense of belonging, using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). It explores how the frequency and quality of faculty interactions, alongside demographic factors—such as gender identity, student-athlete status, first-generation status, and sexual orientation—shape Black students' experiences of belonging.

Guided by Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, this study situates faculty-student engagement within broader institutional and social contexts. Results show that the quality of faculty interactions is the strongest predictor of belonging for Black

students, whereas frequency alone is less impactful. While first-generation and student-athlete statuses were not significant, students with marginalized gender identities and non-heterosexual orientations reported lower belonging scores.

These findings challenge traditional frameworks that center only identity-based belonging and emphasize the need for intentional, inclusive faculty engagement. The study underscores the importance of culturally responsive mentorship, meaningful relationship-building, and institutional policies that foster inclusion beyond surface-level diversity.

Implications include developing faculty training programs, expanding support centers for LGBTQ+ and gender-marginalized Black students, and implementing ongoing assessments to track institutional progress. Future research should investigate longitudinal patterns, the role of peer relationships, and reciprocal benefits for faculty.

By bridging critical perspectives with empirical data, this study highlights how faculty-student interactions can transform Black students' experiences and advance equity at private liberal arts institutions.

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225 The Long Shadow of Parenting: A Structural Equation Approach to Engagement in College

Dr. Yan Dai

Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, USA

Abstract

This empirical study investigates the relationships among caregiving styles, self-efficacy, academic entitlement, and engagement among college students. Grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, it seeks to elucidate how these factors interplay to provide insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers to improve student academic engagement.

Although academic engagement is a well-established predictor of learning achievement, there has been a paucity of research exploring the holistic impact of these factors in higher education. Most existing studies often focus on isolated variables or on children and adolescent populations, leaving the mediating effects underexplored in the college student population.

A hypothesized structural model was tested using survey data from 1,199 college students. Participants completed an online Qualtrics survey including a demographic questionnaire and five instruments: the Parenting Style and Dimensions Questionnaire, the Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance subscale from the MSLQ, the Academic

Entitlement Questionnaire, and the Student Engagement Scale. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed using *M*plus 8.

Results revealed that the authoritative caregiving style positively predicted academic engagement, while the authoritarian style had a negative effect. Permissive caregiving had no significant direct impact on engagement but lowered self-efficacy. Self-efficacy positively predicted engagement and negatively predicted academic entitlement. All caregiving styles positively predicted entitlement, which in turn negatively influenced engagement. Self-efficacy mediated the relationship between permissive caregiving and engagement. Entitlement mediated the effects of all caregiving styles.

Findings highlight the importance of caregiving in shaping college students' motivational and behavioral profiles. Pedagogical implications include promoting autonomy-supportive environments, addressing self-efficacy, and reducing academic entitlement.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Culturally Responsive Education, Access, & Retention

08:00 - 08:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Carol White

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92 Exploring an information and virtual reality college tour intervention: Findings with promise for rural students

Dr. Carol White[1], Dr. Tianlan Wei[1], Dr. Judith Meece[2]

[1]Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA. [2]University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

Abstract

Background

College choice and application processes are critical for postsecondary enrollment. This study reports on the use of a college information and immersive virtual reality (VR) phone application (app) intervention designed to support rural students with gaining access to essential college application procedures, financial aid applications and processes, and career exploration opportunities. Through 360-degree immersive technology, participants could tour all two- and four-year public college campuses in the state and learn specific information (enrollment diversity, specializations, enrollment requirements, etc.) about each campus, and explore career opportunities across the state in seven industry sectors. Funded with the state of Mississippi's Gaining Early

Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) federal grant, the intervention was designed to serve as a form of individualized cultural and social capital to reduce career and college access barriers.

The study included 1,073 participants attending seven non-GEAR UP rural high schools in Mississippi. Google Analytics data were collected on app usage and were analyzed to provide insights about students' level of app engagement during the intervention. A theoretical framework blending college access and motivation research guided the study. Survey measures were included to assess key components of the theoretical model. The survey measures were validated through two years of pilot testing and validation analyses.

Findings/Contributions

The study makes several important contributions to research on college access. First, Google Analytics analyses provided important information on the implementation and use of the VR app across the seven rural high schools. Google Analytics data indicated that individual use of the intervention varied across the high schools, but survey data indicated that students benefitted from using the information and VR app outside of the school implementation. Second, consistent with prior research, descriptive analyses showed the rural student participants had high educational aspirations, but inaccurate information on the costs of college. Third, results from the correlational analyses supported the theoretical framework guiding the information and VR intervention. Most importantly, motivation emerged as a key component of the college-choice process. Along with measures of college knowledge and college-going behaviors, students' perceptions of college-related efficacy ($r = .52$, $p < .001$) and value ($r = .65$, $p < .001$) showed significant relationship to college enrollment plans. Correlational analyses revealed significant relations between parental education levels and student self-reported college-related motivation prior to using the VR app, but correlations were diminished following its use. The results suggest the influence of parental education on the college choice process may be offset by access to individualized college-going capital obtained through the information and VR app intervention.

Implications/Future Research

Taken together, the study has important implications for increasing college access for rural students who are traditionally underrepresented in higher education due to family income, parental education, geographical isolation, or lack of school counselor expertise and assistance. This type of innovation holds promise and can support both college access practitioners as well as students and families. Implications for rural schools, how the innovation serves the public and the greater good, and future college access research will be discussed.

25 Perceptions of Opportunities and Barriers to Academic Success in Selected Rural West Texas Schools: Implications for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Dr. Yolanda Salgado, Dr. Ethel Arzu

The University of Texas Permian Basin, Odessa, Texas, USA

Abstract

Rural schools across the United States face distinctive challenges and opportunities that influence student academic outcomes. This qualitative research study explores the perceptions of school principals and teachers in selected rural West Texas communities regarding factors that promote or hinder student academic success. Grounded in a community-based perspective, the study addressed two central research questions: (1) What are the perceptions of principals and teachers regarding opportunities that promote student academic success? and (2) What are the perceived barriers that impede this success?

Data were gathered through questionnaires and open-ended, semi-structured interviews. Participants identified various opportunities, including strong community-school relationships, culturally respectful environments, dedicated faculty, and the use of sheltered and differentiated instruction to serve diverse learners. However, significant barriers were also cited, such as teacher shortages, perceptions of cultural differences, economic hardship, and limited access to professional development.

Informed by these findings, the research team conducted a professional development (PD) session on culturally responsive teaching for approximately eighty rural educators. The PD emphasized strategies such as valuing students' cultural backgrounds, increasing motivation and engagement, implementing responsive academic vocabulary, and applying the "Funds of Knowledge" framework.

This study contributes to the broader discourse on rural education by highlighting the voices of practitioners and the role of culturally responsive practices in addressing inequities. Educational implications include recommendations for curriculum adaptation, teacher recruitment and retention, targeted funding, and expanded PD opportunities. Future research will explore how policy decisions at the state and district levels can better support rural education systems and scale successful practices.

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165 From Linguistic Wounds to Pedagogical Advocacy: Pláticas with Latina Educators from the Texas Borderlands

Dr. Leticia de la Garza

University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

This qualitative study explores how four former Latina educators in South Texas transformed personal experiences of linguistic racism into pedagogical advocacy throughout their thirty-plus year careers in K-12 public education. Grounded in Chicana/Latina feminist theory and epistemology, the research employed *plática* methodology. The participants—Teresa, Rosa, Gina, and Ana [pseudonyms]—were former bilingual educators with 30-40 years of experience serving the Rio Grande Valley's public education system. Ages ranged from 69 to 92 at the time of data collection.

The study revealed patterns of linguistic experiences across different contexts where home served as a safe space for speaking Spanish, but school and community environments fostered caution and fear. Two key themes emerged from cross-case analysis: (1) emotional wounds from the systemic policing of Spanish in educational settings, and (2) the transformation of those wounds into pedagogical advocacy throughout their careers in education.

The findings contribute to the growing body of knowledge on the role of identity in the educational trajectories and public education careers of Latina women within systemic inequities. This work underscores the need for continued examination of raciolinguistic practices in schools and the vital role that Latina educators play in challenging these systems.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Administration/Leadership

08:00 - 08:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Rachel A. Hattaway

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35 Recruiting and Retaining Teachers in Rural Texas Schools: A Naturalistic Inquiry

Dr. James Laub, Dr. Neil Faulk

Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, USA

Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to provide an understanding of the issues involved in recruiting and retaining high quality teaches faced by rural school superintendents and their respective school boards in the state of Texas. Prior research had primarily focused on suburban and urban districts regarding this topic. Utilizing a qualitative, naturalistic inquiry, this study specifically delved into the personal narratives and professional experiences of rural superintendents in an attempt to offer a comprehensive understanding of the issue of teacher recruitment and retention with limited resources and geographical constraints. The study employed interviews and was conducted within school districts of southeast Texas. Research question one focused on the superintendents' perceived challenges of recruiting high-quality teachers in rural districts in west Texas. Research question two focused on superintendent perceptions of effective and ineffective strategies that were utilized within the southeast Texas schools. Thematic analysis of data revealed interesting results that superintendents firmly perceived as being critical knowledge that rural superintendents needed to be effective in this critical area. The findings from this study contributed valuable insights to the field of educational leadership and also offered several practical recommendations that inform policy decisions and support systems relating to superintendents working in rural schools. The results underscore the challenges and importance of finding and retaining teachers in education today.

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48 Superintendent and School Board Relations in Rural Texas Schools

Dr. James Laub, Dr. Neil Faulk

Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, USA

Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to provide an understanding of the relationships between school
superintendents and their school boards in rural west Texas. Utilizing a qualitative, naturalistic
inquiry, the study delved into the personal narratives and professional experiences of rural
Superintendents to offer a comprehensive understanding of issues and challenges faced in harboring and developing positive relationships between rural superintendents and rural school boards. Inadequate attention to governance challenges in rural education is an issue of local, state, regional, and national interest. The majority of inquiry for many years has concerned itself only with suburban and urban settings. Rural public school educational leaders are confronted with a variety of unique governance challenges, causing many of them to leave public education. The issue of maintaining a competent and qualified teaching staff is only one of very important issues that has brought upon huge challenges for superintendents in rural schools throughout the country. The purpose of this naturalistic study was to interview rural

superintendents with the intent of possibly exploring and understanding how superintendents at rural school districts in west Texas respond to the challenges of developing and maintaining constructive positive relationships with school boards. Researchers used interviews to ascertain data that eventually led to the development of themes. Research question one focused on superintendent perceived challenges of relationships between the superintendents and school boards in rural districts Research question two focused on superintendent perceptions of specific knowledge and strategies utilized by superintendents to address challenges in relationships between the two parties. Knowledge gained from this study has provided rural superintendents with practical strategies and a solid background of ideas and inquiry pertaining to an issue that has been largely ignored.

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89 Role Conflict and the Academic Department Head: A National Sample

Dr. Thomas DeVaney, Dr. Margaret Westmoreland

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA, USA

Abstract

Unlike other academic administrators, the academic department head serves as an administrator and faculty member. Consequently, in addition to their administrative expectations, they must maintain faculty member responsibilities, including a minimum teaching load, continued research productivity, and participation in service activities. The demands and expectations associated with the dual roles of academic department heads create the potential for role conflict, which is described as a situation in which contradictory, competing, or incompatible expectations are placed on an individual who holds two or more roles at the same time. Consequently, an individual who is in role conflict must often ignore one role or set of expectations. Additionally, the extent to which the role or expectation is ignored can impact evaluations, potentially resulting in and an ineffective evaluation.

Due to the organizational position of academic department heads between the faculty and upper administration (e.g., dean, provost, and president), they are susceptible to multiple types of conflict: (a) intra-sender, (b) inter-sender, (c) intra-role, and (d) inter-role. Sender conflict involves differing expectations of individuals at different organizational levels (i.e., upper administration v. faculty). Specifically, inter-sender conflict can occur when expectations from different levels do not align; whereas, intra-

sender conflict can occur when expectations differ among individuals at the same level (e.g., differing expectations of the department head by faculty). Intra-role conflict occurs when expectations associated with the department head role compete with one another (e.g., administrative v. faculty, teaching v. research, etc.), often resulting in one or more expectations being ignored. Finally, inter-role conflict focuses on the competing expectations associated with the role of the department head and personal, non-job related expectations (i.e., work-life balance).

Results from a pilot study based on responses from 22 current and recent department heads who completed an electronic survey indicated that department heads experienced sender, inter-role, and intra-role conflict. Additionally, they reported that the workload associated with the department head role was more than other academic positions that they held.

The goal for this phase of the research is to expand the understanding of the role conflict experienced by academic department heads by collecting quantitative and qualitative data through an electronic survey. The sample for this phase of research will consist of a national sample of academic department heads. The survey will be distributed to attendees of the 2025 Academic Chairpersons Conference. Analysis of quantitative data will be descriptive, and qualitative data analysis will include a combination of deductive coding using pre-identified themes identified in the pilot phase and inductive coding that identifies emerging themes within the pre-identified themes as well as additional major themes.

The findings will be used for additional refinement to the instrument for use in additional research. Additionally, the larger sample will provide results that can be used to determine the areas for which strategies to support academic department heads should be developed.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Mathematics Misc.

08:00 - 08:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Kelly Byrd

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139 Transforming Mathematics Assessment for Sustainable Educational Practices in a Post-Pandemic World

Dr. Erin Blake[1,2], Dr. Dylan Solice[2]

[1]River Parishes Community College, Gonzales, LA, USA. [2]Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches, LA, USA

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic compelled educators to reevaluate traditional assessment practices, particularly in mathematics, where equitable and effective evaluation is vital for fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This study examines how summative assessment practices have evolved in response to the pandemic at a rural community college in southeastern Louisiana, exploring their alignment with the broader goal of sustainable educational development.

The research highlights the challenges and opportunities of transitioning to online assessments during the pandemic through focus groups with mathematics and mathematics-related instructors. The main topics include addressing instructor training, maintaining academic integrity, and adapting assessment methods to support diverse learners. Participants shared experiences integrating innovative technologies and alternative assessment strategies, such as open-book and hybrid models, to ensure equitable access and support student learning amidst unprecedented challenges.

The study employed an action phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of mathematics instructors who navigated the rapid transition to online assessments during the pandemic. Focus groups provided a platform for these educators to reflect on their practices before, during, and after the pandemic. This qualitative method captured detailed insights into their challenges and successes, allowing for a deeper understanding on the broader impacts of instructional practices. Instructors shared how they overcame obstacles, such as limited training and access to resources, and how they adapted their strategies to ensure fairness and accuracy in evaluating student learning. By highlighting the transformative processes these educators underwent, the study sheds light on how crisis-driven changes can lead to lasting improvements in educational practices.

This study's findings align with the conference theme by emphasizing how adaptive educational practices can contribute to sustainable development. The study demonstrates how innovative assessment strategies prepare students to tackle complex challenges, such as resource scarcity and social inequity, by fostering collaboration among educators, administrators, and community stakeholders. Instructors reported lasting changes in their practices, such as placing greater emphasis on formative assessments and student-centered learning, fostering growth and adaptability in both educators and students.

Education is key to building a sustainable future, and this research highlights the need to rethink how we assess students to fit our changing world. By helping students develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability skills, innovative assessment methods are crucial in preparing the next generation to lead and support sustainable growth in our communities.

241 Potential First-Generation Students' Decision Making on Advanced Mathematics

Dr. Marian Jackson-Scott[1], Dr. Elizabeth Jeffers[2]

[1]UL Lafayette, Lafayette, LA, USA. [2]Univ. of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA, USA

Abstract

As more efforts are made to adequately prepare all students for a successful postsecondary education leading to baccalaureate attainment, it is crucial to look at advanced math courses as a perquisite to success is crucial. As the population of first-generation college students increases on campuses, it is becoming even more important to look at this marginalized population before postsecondary enrollment, as this group has the highest college dropout rate. While research tends to focus on first-generation students who are already in college, only a few researchers have studied these young people while they are still in high school (Gibbons & Border; 2010). Advanced math is an important course for all students to take, regardless of their plans after graduation, since many entry-level jobs require students to know math (Ozturk & Singh, 2006). Potential first-generation students often do not take of advanced math while in some cases do not even have access to these courses while in high school (Anderson & Chang, 2011).

The theoretical framework guiding this study is Valenzuela (1999) and Moses and Cobb (2001). In order to understand the connections between taking advanced math courses and proceeding to college, the researcher examined the dynamics that impact these decisions. This qualitative study consisted of interviewing ten potential first-generation students on their decisions on enrollment in advanced math.

Two themes emerged from Valenzuela that are applicable to the findings of this study. The first theme was teacher care, which Valenzuela placed as a component in her framework that drove student achievement and success. Social capital consists of the resources available (Bourdieu, 1986). The more social capital a student has, the greater his or her likelihood of academic success. The lack of social capital available to potential first-generation students in high school forces them to be solely dependent upon the resources and the knowledge of the school counselor and teachers. Since educational attainment is linked to income**,** potential first-generation students from low-income backgrounds are at a severe educational disadvantage. The second theme was institutional barriers. Institutional barriers identified were lack of resources, lack of teacher training in embracing the students' culture, and poor teacher quality If put off by uncaring teachers, some students may be unlikely to want to take a higher course, especially one that is preparing them for college.

The choice to take an advanced math course is a personal one, provided the course is available (Sadler et al., 2014; Updegraff et al., 1996). Rigorous academic preparation, including advanced math coursework is crucial to the success of all students aspiring to baccalaureate degrees. Further research is needed on potential first-generation students since they are an underrepresented population on college campuses. Findings from the study calls for more examination of school and math teacher practices. The school counselor is the gatekeeper to the choice for the enrollment or opting out of advanced math classes for a potential first-generation students. This session will provide a discussion on the key elements influencing and hindering taking advanced math courses for potential first-generation students.

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150 Evidence-Based Practices for Increasing Algebra I Completion

Ms. Molly Hanna

Vela Institute, Boone, NC, USA

Abstract

The importance of taking and passing Algebra I by the 9th grade for preparation for postsecondary education is undeniable, but how to ensure student success is a challenge that often prevents students from taking advanced math courses required by postsecondary institutions. This interactive discussion will present a comprehensive framework used to identify the problem, implement interventions and evaluate them, and share the study results that explore how educators can best support students in Algebra I. The session will feature lessons learned and multiple opportunities to ask questions and dig deeper into the study. The session is for all personnel interested in learning more about innovative methods to continually assess their students and interventions in reliable ways to increase the likelihood of success in Algebra I math courses.

Symposium - Bridging Theory and Practice: Mentorship in a Principal Residency Program as a Model for Leadership Development

08:00 - 08:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Training
Ethel Arzu

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23 Bridging Theory and Practice: Mentorship in a Principal Residency Program as a Model for Leadership Development

Dr. Ethel Arzu

The University of Texas Permian Basin, Odessa, Texas, USA

Abstract

Success in K–12 school leadership requires more than theoretical knowledge—it demands adaptability, relational intelligence, and the capacity to lead effectively amid complex educational realities. This presentation examines the Principal Residency Program (PRP) as a model for leadership preparation that bridges coursework and practice through structured, sustained mentorship.

The PRP pairs aspiring school leaders with experienced principals in a yearlong, immersive residency. Through authentic leadership experiences, regular feedback, and reflective dialogue, fellows develop leadership readiness and a strong professional identity. The design of this program reflects a collaborative effort between university faculty and a district partner, resulting in intentionally crafted structures that guide fellows' development.

Mentorship within the PRP is explored through two theoretical lenses: professional socialization and Knowles's (1984) theory of andragogy. Principal fellows must learn to navigate school culture and adapt to leadership norms and expectations—key components of professional socialization. Simultaneously, their development as adult learners aligns with andragogical principles: self-direction, internal motivation, and experiential learning (Connery & Frick, 2021).

The mentorship model includes three integrated components:

- Monthly rotating cohort meetings led by experienced faculty mentors, offering diverse perspectives and guided discussion.
- Weekly principal fellows' meetings, state-mandated and designed to provide structure and continuity throughout the residency.
- Fellow-led facilitation opportunities within cohort meetings, promoting leadership voice and reflective practice.

These structures support not only technical skill development but also reflective, relational, and adaptive leadership capacities.

As leadership demands increase, this model offers important insights for universities, state agencies, and districts seeking to design preparation experiences that are authentic, equity-centered, and relational. Program designers are encouraged to embed real-world challenges and sustained mentorship into their models. District leaders are called to prioritize deep, hands-on partnerships beyond compliance. Mentors and aspiring leaders are reminded that true leadership capacity is built not in isolation, but through shared inquiry and purposeful growth.

Reference:

Knowles, M. S. (1984). The adult learner: A neglected species (3rd ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf.

Connery, L. A., & Frick, W. C. (2021). A formal administrator mentoring program: Perceived learning benefits and insights into leadership well-being. Inquiry in Education, 13(1), 3.

Training - Career and College Readiness for the Middle Grades: Building Awareness & Aspiration Before High School

08:00 - 08:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Presentation type Training
Erika McMahan

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14 Career and College Readiness for the Middle Grades: Buiding Awareness and Aspiration Before High School

Dr. Erika McMahan

UCA, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

College and career readiness doesn’t start in high school, it starts with identity, curiosity, and exposure in the middle grades. This interactive training equips educators with a developmentally appropriate framework for embedding CCR into the middle school experience. From college visits and career days to soft skill development and student goal-setting, participants will walk away with practical strategies to cultivate aspiration, agency, and early postsecondary awareness in grades 6–8.

RiP Lecture - AI

09:00 - 09:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Lecture)
Jane Nell Luster

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221 Exploring AI-Enhanced Virtual Reality Simulation for Metacognitive Regulation in Engineering Education

-- Stephen Abu

University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA

Abstract

Abstract

This research investigates how AI-enhanced Virtual Reality (VR) simulations can foster metacognitive skill development among undergraduate Mechanical Engineering students. The study intervention focuses on simulating mass-spring-damper systems and dynamic spring loading—core concepts in mechanical dynamics. Using a mixed methods approach with a quasi-experimental design, two student groups (n=50) were compared: one engaging with an AI-driven VR simulation, and a control group receiving traditional instruction. The AI-enhanced VR simulation integrates real-time adaptive feedback through an embedded AI agent to support experiential learning, self-regulation, and cognitive strategy use. Grounded in the 8 Pillars Model of Metacognition and the TPACK framework, this study aims to evaluate the pedagogical effectiveness and cognitive impact of AI-enhanced immersive learning in mechanical engineering education.

Research Problem

Mechanical engineering students often solve complex problems—like analyzing mass-spring-damper systems—yet later struggle to recall or reproduce the steps they used. This challenge is often not due to lack of effort or intelligence, but rather a deficit in metacognitive development—the ability to monitor, evaluate, and regulate one's own thinking processes (Drigas & Mitsea, 2020). This deficit can hinder long-term learning and transfer, especially in courses where reasoning processes are cumulative and procedural. Unfortunately, Traditional instruction often lacks the scaffolding required to support the development of metacognitive control, leading to shallow learning and fragile knowledge transfer. While VR provides an opportunity to immerse students in the dynamic behavior of engineering systems, its pedagogical impact is limited when unaccompanied by mechanisms that support real-time self-reflection and strategy adjustment. Artificial Intelligence (AI), on the other hand, enables personalized feedback and adaptive learning paths, but is rarely deployed within immersive, simulation-based environments. The integration of AI-driven feedback into VR simulations may provide a solution—bridging the cognitive gap between experience and understanding, and cultivating the metacognitive skills students need to recognize, remember, and apply what they've learned.

Relevant Literature

The integration of AI and VR technologies in education has yielded promising outcomes in improving engagement and conceptual understanding (Ibáñez & Delgado-Kloos, 2018; Valladares Ríos et al., 2023). VR enables immersive simulations where students can visualize and interact with abstract systems in real-time, while AI contributes adaptive feedback, data-driven support, and personalization (Yang & Xia, 2023). However, most prior studies treat these technologies separately or within general STEM education contexts. Few have focused on their joint impact on metacognitive development, especially as it relates to mechanical engineering—a discipline where complex system modeling demands high levels of cognitive control, reflection, and strategy use. The theoretical grounding for this study draws on the 8 Pillars Model of Metacognition (Drigas & Mitsea, 2020) and the TPACK framework (Koehler & Mishra, 2009).

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent does participation in AI-enhanced VR simulations foster improvement in metacognitive skills (e.g., planning, monitoring, and self-evaluation) versus traditional classroom instruction among engineering students?

RQ2: How does the provision of real-time, AI-agent feedback within VR simulations influence students' self-regulation processes (goal setting, strategy use, monitoring, and

adjustment) and the development of strategic problem-solving skills during complex engineering tasks?

RQ3: What is the relationship between the level and type of student engagement in AI-enhanced VR simulations and students' ability to monitor, calibrate, and reflect on their cognitive and learning processes?

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

This study adopts two theoretical frameworks:

1. **8 Pillars Model of Metacognition** (Drigas & Mitsea, 2020): A developmental model used to assess learners' self-awareness, self-regulation, discrimination, and cognitive adaptation. It provides a construct for identifying growth in metacognitive abilities throughout the intervention.
2. **TPACK Framework** (Koehler & Mishra, 2009): Used to guide the design of the VR simulation and ensure pedagogical alignment. It emphasizes the intersection of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge—critical when designing simulations for domain-specific instruction like mass-spring-damper systems.

Methods

Design

The study employs a mixed-methods approach using a quasi-experimental design. The intervention involves two parallel groups (n = 25 per group):

1. **Experimental Group**: Uses the AI-enhanced VR simulation of spring-mass-damper dynamics.
2. **Control Group**: Receives conventional lecture-based instruction on the same topics in the course module (ME372).

Participants

Participants are 50 second- and third-year Mechanical Engineering undergraduates enrolled in the ME372 course. We employ "Random sampling" to balance demographic characteristics.

Intervention

The VR simulation covers:

1. 3D VR visualization and manipulation of mass-spring-damper systems
2. Embedded AI-agent real-time feedback system that supports learners

3. Embedded metacognitive prompts/questions designed to foster reflection and self-assessment

Data Collection

Quantitative Instruments

1. Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI) – Pre- and post-intervention
2. Task performance metrics from the simulation (time, accuracy, self-corrections)
3. Knowledge assessments aligned with ME372 learning outcomes
4. Learner engagement survey
5. Usability survey

Qualitative Data

1. Focus group interviews with a purposive sample from each group
2. Behavioral video analysis of in-simulation interaction (engagement, hesitation, reflection)
3. Student logs capturing real-time reflections and strategy usage

Data Analysis

Quantitative

1. Paired t-tests and ANOVA to assess differences in metacognitive gains and academic performance between the groups.
2. Behavioural analysis (behaviour frequency, probability matrix, and random permutation test) to explore predictors of metacognitive growth (e.g., AI feedback intensity, interaction frequency).

Qualitative

1. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) will code transcripts and logs for patterns related to self-regulation and reflection.
2. Triangulation approach to integrate qualitative insights with quantitative trends to build a comprehensive interpretation.

Anticipated Findings

Students in the AI-enhanced VR group are expected to show significantly greater improvements in metacognitive awareness, particularly in self-monitoring and self-regulation domains. The embedded AI agent is hypothesized to foster deeper engagement and prompt reflection during problem-solving. Additionally, it is anticipated that students will demonstrate greater retention and application of core mechanical dynamics concepts as a result of the immersive learning environment.

Scholarly Significance

This study fills a critical research gap by contextualizing the integration of AI and VR within a discipline-specific, highly fundamental mechanical engineering course. It offers empirical insights into how real-time AI technologies can support the development of higher-order cognitive skills. The findings will have direct implications for instructional design in engineering education and contribute to evolving theories of technology-enhanced learning and metacognitive scaffolding in STEM.

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210 Exploring AI and Human Creativity Through TTCT Coding and Personality: A Mixed-Methods Comparative Study

Mr. Sayed In Abdullah, Ms. Nancy Florida, Ms. Leila Kargaripadar, Dr. Mehdi Ghahremani

Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi, USA

Abstract

1.Research Problem or Objectives

This study explores the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and human creativity, with a particular focus on how Large Language Models (LLMs) and human participants perform on creative tasks using the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) framework. Recent advances in AI have shown that LLMs, such as GPT-4 and Claude, are capable of producing creative outputs comparable to human responses, especially when evaluated using standardized creativity assessments (Hubert et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2024). Additionally, the concept of creativity is known to be multifaceted, influenced by cognitive, motivational, and personality-related factors (McCrae & Costa, 1997). By integrating personality assessment into the creativity comparison, this study also aims to investigate how individual personality traits, specifically Openness to Experience, relate to human creative performance. The main objectives are to assess (1) baseline creativity of AI responses across multiple scenarios, (2) the enhancement of AI creativity using chain-of-thought (CoT) prompting, and (3) compare AI and human

creativity scores using TTCT dimensions, and (4) examine the influence of Openness to Experience on human creative output.

2.Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in two key theoretical models. First, the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) provide a validated and widely used framework for assessing divergent thinking, particularly across the dimensions of fluency, originality, elaboration, abstractness of titles, and resistance to premature closure (Kim, 2006; Torrance, 1966). The TTCT offers a suite of authentic activities that prompt the test-taker to engage in various types of thinking that mirror the kinds of creativity required for real-life and daily human operations, including asking questions, guessing causes and consequences, improving a product, and utilizing imagination (STS, 2017). The TTCT framework evaluates creativity through metrics such as fluency, originality, elaboration, and flexibility.

Second, the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality serves as a foundation for examining the influence of Openness to Experience on creativity. People who are high on openness tend to engage in and seek out new information and experiences (DeYoung et al., 2007), and as such, they are more likely to use and accept new technology (McElroy et al., 2007; Svendsen et al., 2013). Many studies have investigated the relationship between creativity and the five basic factors of personality, and the finding is that openness to experience are positive predictors of creativity.

3.Research Questions and Relevant Literature

This study explores three key questions: (1) How do Large Language Models (LLMs) and human participants compare in generating creative responses to scenario-based tasks using the TTCT framework? (2) Does chain-of-thought (CoT) prompting enhance the creativity of AI-generated responses? (3) How is the personality trait of Openness to Experience related to human participants' creativity scores?

Recent advances in AI have shown that LLMs, such as GPT-4, are capable of producing creative outputs that perform well on divergent thinking tasks (Zhao et al., 2025). These findings raise critical questions about how creativity manifests in AI and how it compares with human creativity (Chakrabarty et al., 2023).

4.Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

This is a mixed-methods comparative study using scenario-based creative prompts. In Phase 1, 31 AI tools were given 11 scenario-based tasks without any engineered prompt. Their responses were analyzed using the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT) coding framework. Each sentence of the AI-generated responses was coded along TTCT dimensions such as fluency, originality, elaboration, and flexibility. Inter-rater reliability was calculated between coders to ensure coding accuracy (IRR = 90.91%).

In Phase 2, human participants will respond to 3–5 selected scenarios and complete a BFI-10 personality inventory. Participants' responses will also be coded using the TTCT framework. This study is being conducted under IRB oversight at Mississippi State University.

In Phase 3, The same 11 scenarios will be re-run with same AI tools, this time using Chain-of-Thought (CoT) prompts to explore whether guided reasoning improves TTCT scores. These results will then be compared to the baseline AI responses and human data.

5.Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

The dataset includes AI-generated responses from 31 different large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Gemini, and Claude, based on 11 real-world based scenarios. Human participant data will be collected from 10 graduate students. Creativity will be assessed through adapted TTCT coding, and participants' Openness to Experience will be measured using the BFI-10 inventory.

6.Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Preliminary findings from Phase 1 indicate that AI responses without engineered prompts demonstrate measurable creativity across multiple TTCT dimensions. After analyzing the responses, the most frequently coded dimensions were Category Variety (CV = 24.0%), Idea Expansion (IE = 23.4%), and Ability to Develop (AD = 22.3%), indicating strong elaboration and flexibility characteristics. Originality (RI = 0.7%) and Novel Idea Generation (NIG = 0.3%) occurred less frequently, suggesting that while AI outputs are rich in elaboration and fluency, their capacity to generate truly novel or unexpected ideas remains limited. The addition of Chain-of-Thought prompting in Phase 3 is anticipated to improve AI performance in originality-related dimensions.

7.Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution to the Field

This study offers a novel contribution by combining computational creativity, human creativity assessment, and personality research within a unified TTCT framework. This project will contribute to lifelong inquiry by encouraging both educators and learners to reflect on how AI tools support creative thinking and problem-solving. Findings may inform curriculum design by showing how AI scaffolds creativity and provides personalized support for students with varying levels of Openness to Experience. These insights are especially valuable in gifted education, where fostering originality is essential, and in AI-integrated classrooms where human-AI collaboration enhances creativity.

8.Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Prior to the Annual Meeting

This Research in Progress (RiP) is expected to complete several milestones, including the collection of human participant responses and BFI-10 personality data, CoT-based

data collection from the same AI tools and scenarios, TTCT coding and comparative analysis of all response sets, and statistical analysis (t-tests, correlations) comparing AI and human creativity by scenario and personality level.

RiP Lecture - Accreditation, College Success, International Education

09:00 - 09:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Lecture)
Dustin Whitlock

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16 Developing a Leadership Tool for Accreditation Success in Community Colleges: A Delphi Study Aligned with SACSCOC Standards, AACC Competencies, and Distributed Leadership

Ms. Megan Bange, Dr. Bryan McCoy

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, Louisiana, USA

Abstract

Developing a Leadership Tool for Accreditation Success in Community Colleges: A Delphi Study Aligned with SACSCOC Standards, AACC Competencies, and Distributed Leadership

Research Problem and Objectives

Accreditation is a foundation of institutional quality assurance in higher education, particularly for community colleges that serve diverse populations and operate with limited resources. Despite the high stakes, there is limited standardized framework or tools that guide institutional leaders through the complex process of preparing for and sustaining accreditation under the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). This limitation often leads to inconsistent practices, misaligned efforts, and undue burden on individuals or small teams rather than institution-wide engagement.

This research aims to develop a practical, evidence-based leadership tool that guides institutional leaders in organizing and managing accreditation processes. The tool will be designed to align with SACSCOC accreditation standards and grounded in the principles of distributed leadership and the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Competencies for Community College Leaders. Through this work, I

plan to support leaders in building collaborative, sustainable practices for institutional effectiveness.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Two key foundations frame this study:

1. Theoretical Framework – Distributed Leadership: Grounded in the work of Spillane (2006) and Harris (2014), distributed leadership views leadership as a collective rather than an individual activity. This approach is especially relevant in community colleges, where accreditation efforts require coordination among faculty, staff, and administrators across departments. Distributed leadership supports the development of shared responsibility, institutional memory, and sustainable change.

2. Conceptual Framework – SACSCOC Accreditation Standards: The SACSCOC standards emphasize institutional effectiveness, student achievement, governance, curriculum integrity, and continuous improvement. These standards provide the operational structure for accreditation compliance and form the basis for the practical alignment of the leadership tool.

Research Questions and Relevant Literature

The following primary research questions guide this Delphi study:
1. What critical elements leaders need to structure effective accreditation practices aligned with SACSCOC standards?
2. How can leadership frameworks—particularly distributed leadership and the AACC Competencies—be incorporated into a practical tool for accreditation preparation and sustainability?

The literature on accreditation leadership identifies challenges such as unclear role distribution, fragmented communication, and overreliance on compliance checklists (Brittingham, 2009; Phillips & Kinser, 2018). Distributed leadership literature emphasizes the importance of shared decision-making and capacity-building across institutional levels (Harris & Spillane, 2008). The AACC Competencies provide practical leadership skills, including organizational strategy, institutional finance, and advocacy, that are not yet integrated into accreditation models but are essential for effective execution.

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

A Delphi research design will be used to gather expert consensus and develop the accreditation leadership tool. The Delphi method is well-suited for exploratory research where specialist judgment is required to define best practices, especially in areas with limited empirical tools (Linstone & Turoff, 1975).

The study will involve three iterative rounds:

- Round 1: An open-ended questionnaire will be administered to a panel of experts, including SACSCOC liaisons, institutional effectiveness officers, and academic leaders from Louisiana's community colleges.
- Round 2: Thematic responses from Round 1 will be coded and used to construct a Likert-scale instrument to rate the importance and feasibility of identified elements.
- Round 3: Consensus will be sought on priority items and the format of the final tool.

Data Sources, Evidence, and Materials

Data will be collected from a panel of 15–20 expert participants representing various roles in the accreditation process within the Louisiana Community and Technical College System (LCTCS). Selection criteria include prior experience in successful reaffirmation, leadership in institutional effectiveness, and current or past role in SACSCOC reviews.

Evidence will include qualitative responses from open-ended questions, quantitative ratings from the second and third Delphi rounds, and expert feedback on draft versions of the tool. NVivo will be used for thematic coding, and Lawshe's Content Validity Ratio (CVR) will support the analysis of consensus strength in the quantitative phases.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Preliminary findings from Round 1, expected by late Summer 2025, will likely identify key domains of effective accreditation leadership, such as communication strategies, integration of assessment data, cross-functional collaboration, and leadership behaviors aligned with AACC Competencies. Anticipated findings include:
- Clear leadership practices that support alignment with SACSCOC standards.
- Identification of distributed leadership practices that promote engagement and accountability across the institution.
- A validated list of leadership competencies and structures necessary for effective accreditation work.

The final product will be a structured leadership tool, adaptable across institutions, designed to guide planning, organization, communication, and continuous improvement in accreditation.

Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution

This study makes a novel contribution by combining accreditation compliance and leadership development into a single, usable framework. It addresses a longstanding gap in the literature and practice by moving beyond checklists and timelines toward leadership behaviors and structural alignment.

The study also responds to calls in higher education research for more practitioner-centered tools grounded in real-world challenges. By focusing on community colleges—

often underserved in leadership research—this work contributes to a more equitable understanding of organizational effectiveness and continuous improvement.

Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Before the Annual Meeting

By the time of the Annual Meeting in November 2025, I anticipate completing all three rounds of the Delphi study. Between now and the conference, the following steps are scheduled:
- Final IRB approval and participant onboarding (Spring/Summer 2025)
- Completion of Round 1 (early Summer 2025)
- Analysis and development of Round 2 instrument (mid-Summer 2025)
- Completion of Rounds 2 and 3 with expert feedback (late Summer to early Fall 2025)
- Drafting and refinement of the accreditation leadership tool (late Fall 2025)

At the Annual Meeting, I will present the preliminary findings and the prototype of the leadership tool, along with recommendations for implementation and adaptation in other community college systems.

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246 The Role Of Socially Prescribed Perfectionism In Academic Burnout Among International Students

Ms. Akshaya Godavarthi, Dr. Wei Tianlan

Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi, USA

Abstract

Perfectionism is a multidimensional personality trait characterized by drive for flawlessness, unrealistic standards, and harsh self-criticism. It can have both motivational and detrimental consequences for learning and well-being.

While perfectionism and burnout have been widely studied in general student population, there's limited research focusing on international students. Language barriers, cultural adjustment and academic pressure can amplify the impact of socially prescribed perfectionism on burnout for this group. Understanding perfectionism in this population is essential for developing targeted well-being and academic success intervention.

This study aims to clarify the direct link between the pressure to meet others' expectations on burnout in international students. A quantitative survey design will be used to examine the correlation between socially prescribed perfectionism and burnout experienced by international students. By focusing on this under-researched population,

the study offers practical implications for higher education institutions to support international student's well-being and provide deeper understanding of their unique challenges

This research is guided by two complimentary psychological frameworks explaining the link between perfectionism and academic burnout in international students.

1. Hewitt & Flett's Multidimensional Perfectionism Theory (1991)

According to this theory, perfectionism has three separate dimensions: self-oriented, other oriented, socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP), which defines SPP as a maladaptive form of perfectionism stemming from external expectations.

2. Maslach Burnout Inventory (2002), which conceptualizes academic burnout across emotional exhaustion (EE), cynicism (CY) and academic efficacy (AE).

Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and the three dimensions of academic burnout among international students?
2. Does socially prescribed perfectionism significantly predict burnout outcomes in this population?
3. Which dimension of academic burnout is most strongly associated with socially prescribed perfectionism among international students?

Previous research confirms that SPP is a significant predictor of emotional and academic distress. For example, Childs & Stoeber (2012) discovered that SPP was a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion in workplace settings while Rice et al. (2012) identified links between self-critical perfectionism (related to SPP), acculturative stress and depression in international students. Zhang et al., (2025) also investigated how SPP predicts burnout among Chinese students. Despite the increasing research, there are still very few quantitative studies that focus on international students and specifically isolate SPP as a unique predictor.

This quantitative, cross-sectional survey examines the relationship between SPP and burnout. Participants will complete a self-report questionnaire on Qualtrics. Adult International students aged 18+ currently enrolled in U.S. universities will be recruited via online platforms and international student organizations. The study uses SPP subscale of the Hewitt & Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale - SPP subscale (15 items) and Maslach Burnout Inventory – Student Survey (MBI-SS; 15 items). Estimated completion time is 10–15 minutes. Participation is anonymous and voluntary, with data collected via Qualtrics. Reverse-coded items are items are adjusted as per guidelines.

Data analysis is conducted through SPSS. descriptive statistics summarize demographics and variable distributions. Cronbach's alpha assesses internal reliability. Pearson correlations explore relationship between SPP and each burnout dimension.

Multiple regression models assess the predictive power of SPP on EE, CY, and AE, reporting R^2, beta coefficients, and p-values.

Preliminary findings indicate that SPP is positively associated with emotional exhaustion and cynicism and negatively associated with academic efficacy. These results will build upon previous research by (e.g., Childs & Stoeber (2012), Rice et al. (2012), Zhang et al., (2025)) by focusing on an underrepresented group and framing burnout through external perfectionistic pressure.

The study addresses a critical gap in educational psychology and cross-cultural psychology by examining how socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP) in predicting burnout among international students, an underrepresented yet uniquely vulnerable population. The results will support institutions in developing culturally responsive interventions in higher education, including things like mentorship, peer support and faculty training to reduce burnout and promote wellbeing.

Prior to the MSERA annual meeting, remaining tasks include finalizing data collection, conducting full statistical analyses and preparing a poster summarizing key findings. A manuscript draft will also be developed for potential publication.

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116 Voices That Matter: A participatory inquiry on first-generation college student success

-- Monique Legendre

University of New Orleans, New Orleans, LA, USA

Abstract

Overview of Research in Progress

To cultivate a community of lifelong researchers, this study utilizes student voice as a powerful form of knowledge to examine and improve educational practices that support first-generation students' (FGS) success. This qualitative dissertation research centers the lived experiences of FGS ages 18–24 who have persisted beyond their first semester of college. The study explores how these students evaluate the effectiveness of first-generation-focused high school and college policies, programs, and initiatives. Through a strengths-based and participatory lens, the project positions students not as passive recipients but as co-constructors of knowledge, bringing critical insights to inform first-generation program development and decision making.

This inquiry demonstrates how qualitative, student-driven research contributes to equity-focused educational reform and promotes reflective practice among educators, scholars, and practitioners. Findings will offer practical implications for improving

postsecondary outcomes through policies and programming that center the lived experiences of FGCS. In doing so, the study promotes a vision of student success that is informed by those most impacted and challenges deficit narratives that often shape first-generation student programs and policies.

Current Stage of Research

I am completing final edits on my dissertation proposal and plan to submit my IRB application by mid-July. Upon approval, I will begin participant recruitment. I plan to collaborate with the Career Immersion and Leadership Institute (CILI) in New Orleans, LA, an organization that supports first-generation, Pell-eligible college students.

Research Problem

Despite increased attention to the challenges faced by FGCS, their voices remain largely absent from the development and evaluation of programs intended to support them. While evidence supports the value of interventions such as dual enrollment, Early College High Schools, and campus-based support services, these initiatives are typically assessed from institutional or researcher-defined perspectives rather than those of the students most affected (Bettencourt et al., 2022; Edmunds et al., 2017; Locke & Grooms, 2022; Osborne, 2024). The absence of FGCS voices in the evaluation and development of these programs represents a critical gap in both practice and research.

Additionally, the research literature lacks widespread use of justice-oriented, participatory methods such as Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR), which empower students to serve as co-researchers and knowledge producers. This study aims to address these critical gaps, by engaging FGCS as solution holders.

Theoretical Frameworks

This research is guided by Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model (SIM) and the Positive Youth Development (PYD) (2004 & 2016) framework. Tinto's model provides a structural lens to examine academic and social conditions that impact persistence, while PYD highlights the importance of youth agency.

Together, these frameworks support a justice-oriented research design that elevates FGCS as collaborators, critiques institutional systems, and generates student-informed insights for designing programs and policies that reflect real student needs.

Research Questions

1. How do first-generation college students who have persisted to their third semester or higher perceive high school and post-secondary first-generation programs designed to increase enrollment, persistence, and student success?

2. What do these students identify as the key factors that encourage first-generation student success and persistence?

Relevant Literature

FGCS account for nearly one-third of all undergraduates in the United States, but they graduate at significantly lower rates—56% within six years, compared to 75% of their continuing-generation peers (Center for First-Generation Student Success, 2020). This disparity is linked to multiple systemic barriers, including under-resourced schools, a lack of college knowledge, and limited access to support systems (Broadhurst et al., 2023; Hamilton et al., 2016; Tinto, 2017).

Although early exposure programs, such as dual enrollment, Early College High Schools, and campus-based support services, have shown promise, they are not universally accessible, and their effectiveness is rarely evaluated from the perspectives of FGCS themselves (Bettencourt et al., 2022; Edmunds et al., 2017; Locke & Grooms, 2022; Osborne, 2024). Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) methods address these gaps by positioning students as co-researchers and knowledge producers (Fine & Torre, 2021). Grounded in the critical pedagogies of Freire (2007) and hooks (1994), CPAR emphasizes student agency and co-creation of knowledge as pathways to educational justice. However, CPAR remains underutilized in FGCS research. This study contributes to the body of knowledge by embracing FGCS voices as central to developing effective and equitable supports for FGCS.

Methods

This study will employ Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR), drawing from CPAR principles. FGCS will be engaged as collaborators and solution-holders. This research inquiry will employ qualitative methods, specifically narrative inquiry. FGCS will participate in three 90-minute round table discussions.

Data Sources, Evidence, and Materials

Primary data will come from roundtable discussions with FGCS representatives from various college types and backgrounds, aiming to capture diverse lived experiences. In keeping with CPAR, students will co-interpret the data and contribute to developing recommendations. Together, these sources provide rich, community-based evidence to inform educational policy and practice.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

It is anticipated that FGCS will identify both relational and structural supports as critical to their academic success and persistence and will emphasize the importance of early exposure to college through dual enrollment, mentorship from high school and college staff who understand first-generation experiences, and culturally responsive advising and academic support once on campus. I also anticipate that students will express a

strong desire to be recognized not only as recipients of support but as contributors to program design and evaluation.

Scholarly Significance and Contribution to the Field

This study contributes to FGCS research by promoting a student-centered, participatory approach that critiques and reimagines the creation and assessment of educational programs. CPAR serves as a transformative approach that emphasizes student voice as both a method and an outcome. The research provides practical, student-informed insights for institutions, policymakers, and practitioners. It aligns with the conference theme by modeling how research can serve as both a mindset and a method to cultivate a new generation of researchers that includes students

Anticipated Progress by Conference Date

By the MSERA Annual Meeting in November, I expect to have completed all three roundtable discussions and begun data analysis and coding. The completed dissertation is scheduled for defense by late April 2026.

Position Paper - When Early Childhood Literacy Problems Persist: A Case Study

09:00 - 09:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Presentation type Position Paper
Rod Uzat

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200 When Early Childhood Literacy Problems Persist: A Case Study

Dr. Doris Ellison[1], Dr. Rod Uzat[2], Dr. Tara Wilson[2]

[1]Klamath County School District, Klamath, Oregon, USA. [2]UTPB, Odessa, Texas, USA

Abstract

Childhood literacy continues to be one of the most significant problems in American education. In 2022, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reported 37% of fourth grade students did not meet the NAEP baseline literacy standard, an increase of 14% in the past 20 years with the worst decline (3%) coming since 2019 (Shulman et al., 2024).

Likewise, for over a decade, Klamath County School District (KCSD) in Oregon has faced persistent challenges in early literacy, with only 30% of students in grades K–3 reading at grade level. While the district has taken steps to address the problem, including significant investments in a phonics-focused instructional model supported by pacing guides and fidelity checks, little measurable improvement had occurred. A district-wide reassessment in the 2022-23 academic year prompted by the resurgence of the Science of Reading framework, identified that while foundational skills were being taught accurately, instruction lacked differentiation and relied solely on whole-group teaching.

In response, KCSD adopted a Science of Reading-aligned curriculum, implemented parallel block scheduling to support small-group instruction, and provided extensive professional development in differentiated literacy strategies. While these efforts led to substantial gains in Kindergarten literacy scores, similar improvements have not been observed in grades 1–3 over the past three years.

What causes the persistence of these literacy challenges and how does the district go forward from here?

The answers to these questions are important not only to Klamath but to the nation as a whole. This case study will review the district-wide reassessment and other relevant contextual data to explain the strength and depth of Klamath's literacy problems. It will continue with a breakdown of the district's plans for moving forward, which include the implementation of a peer coaching model and utilizing successful Kindergarten teachers to train and support first grade educators. If results improve from this effort, the model will expand to second and third grades. The article will close with a discussion of the complexity and scope of the childhood literacy problem and the importance of building internal capacity and sustaining effective instructional practices to improve early literacy outcomes across all elementary grade levels.

Shulman, K., Baicker, K., & Mayes, L. (2024). Reading for life-long health. *Frontiers in Pediatrics*, *12*,

1401739. https://doi.org/10.3389/fped.2024.1401739

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Administration/Leadership

09:00 - 09:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Kari Smith-Murphy

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11 From Burnout to Breakthrough: Exploring Middle School Teacher Burnout and the Ongoing Need for Research-Informed Solutions

Dr. Sylvia Mitchell

Union University, Jackson, TN, USA

Abstract

This dissertation examined whether statistically significant differences exist in levels of disengagement and exhaustion—two key components of burnout—among middle school core content teachers in grades 6–8 within the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. The study focused on teachers of Math, Science, Social Studies, and English Language Arts to determine whether the subject taught influences burnout levels. The Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI), a validated instrument for assessing disengagement and exhaustion, was used to measure burnout among participants.

A total of 212 teachers voluntarily responded to an online OLBI survey distributed via district email lists. The survey remained open for two weeks, and the study exceeded its target sample size of 200 responses, with approximately 50 participants per content area. Using a non-experimental, quantitative research design, the study employed a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare burnout levels across subject areas.

The results indicated no statistically significant differences in teachers' reported levels of disengagement, exhaustion, or overall burnout based on the core content area taught. These findings suggest that subject matter alone does not account for variation in teacher burnout at the middle school level. The study underscores the need to investigate other contributing factors—such as school culture, administrative support, and workload—that may influence burnout across disciplines.

By contributing to the broader understanding of burnout in K–12 education, this study supports ongoing inquiry and practitioner-led research, in alignment with MSERA's mission to cultivate a community of lifelong researchers committed to educational improvement.

33 The Weight of the Work: Examining K-12 Teachers' Perceptions of Workload, Intensification, and Job Satisfaction

Ms. Kari Smith-Murphy

Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA

Abstract

The teaching profession has undergone dramatic intensification in recent years, with educators assuming increasingly complex roles beyond instructional delivery. These complexities include meeting diverse student needs, adapting to new technologies, managing administrative responsibilities, and providing emotional and behavioral support—often without additional resources or compensation. While burnout and teacher turnover are widely acknowledged issues, the specific role of workload expectations in contributing to job dissatisfaction and attrition remains underexplored. This study investigates how K–12 teachers perceive their workload and how these perceptions relate to job satisfaction and the intent to leave the profession.

Guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, this research conceptualizes workload as a job demand that contributes to emotional exhaustion and dissatisfaction when not offset by adequate support. The JD-R framework has been widely used to understand occupational stress and retention, making it a fitting lens for examining current K-12 teaching conditions. The study aims to address the research question: RQ1: *How do teachers currently perceive workload expectations and demands in relation to job satisfaction?*

A quantitative, correlational design was used, drawing on functional voluntary sampling. Participants (N = 36) were currently employed K–12 teachers in the United States, recruited via educator-specific social media platforms including Reddit, Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Data were collected through a 30-item online survey hosted on Qualtrics, loosely adapted from the Teacher Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (TJSQ). The instrument included items on workload perception, burnout, administrative support, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and demographic variables.

Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, multiple linear regressions, and one-way ANOVAs were used to analyze relationships between constructs. Regression analysis revealed that burnout and inadequate administrative support were statistically significant predictors of both job dissatisfaction and turnover intent. Specifically, higher reported burnout and lower perceived support were associated with increased dissatisfaction and greater intent to leave. Additional duties and lack of planning time were also associated with elevated stress levels. No significant differences in job satisfaction, burnout, or turnover intention were found based on union status or grade level taught.

While the small sample size and voluntary sampling method limit generalizability, the findings provide empirical support for the JD-R model in educational contexts and highlight specific workload-related contributors to dissatisfaction. The study also identifies the need for validated, context-specific instruments to more accurately assess teacher workload and satisfaction. Ethical safeguards, including informed consent and anonymity, were implemented throughout the study and approved by Auburn University's Institutional Review Board.

This research contributes to the ongoing dialogue about teacher retention by emphasizing the weight of workload expectations in shaping teacher well-being. Findings suggest that targeted policy interventions focused on reducing burnout and increasing administrative support may improve job satisfaction and reduce attrition. Future research should expand on these findings with larger, more diverse samples and mixed-method approaches to deepen our understanding of the complex relationship between workload and teacher sustainability.

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171 The Influence of Social Emotional Learning Training on Teacher Development and Well-Being: A Qualitative Study

Dr. Nicholas Monette

Lamar University, Beaumont, Texas, USA

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation-in-practice was to explore the perceptions of elementary educators regarding the effectiveness of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)-focused professional development and its influence on teacher well-being, instructional practices, and emotional and social competencies. Conducted at a Pre-K through 5th-grade campus in Southeast Texas, the study involved ten educators who participated in SEL training and engaged in semi-structured interviews to reflect on their experiences. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, the researcher applied open coding and thematic analysis to identify key themes. The findings revealed that SEL-focused professional development positively influenced teacher wellness, mindfulness, classroom management, and instructional planning while highlighting the need for consistent, practical, and accessible training aligned with daily teaching experiences. The study concludes that integrating SEL into ongoing professional development supports teacher sustainability, enhances student engagement, and fosters emotionally supportive learning environments. Implications for practice include the development of teacher-centered SEL programs, embedding SEL into lesson planning, and offering flexible delivery formats to meet diverse educator needs.

Symposium - Cultivating Success: Reimagining Academic Support Through Holistic Coaching and Service Integration

09:00 - 09:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Fredrika Cowley

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26 Cultivating Success: Reimagining Academic Support Through Holistic Coaching and Service Integration

Dr. Fredrika Cowley, Dr. Terrance Pryor

The University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

Amid growing calls for student-centered academic support and equity-driven retention strategies, one university undertook a comprehensive reorganization of its academic services to better meet the needs of its diverse undergraduate population. This presentation outlines the planning, restructuring, and implementation process that led to the development of the Center for Academic Success and Achievement (CASA)—a centralized, student-facing hub that integrates academic coaching, tutoring, and writing support.

The rebranding and restructuring unified previously siloed offices (writing center, educational support, and academic retention office) into an integrated model that streamlines service delivery while expanding access and impact. As part of this transition, the Center for Academic Retention and Enrichment Services (CARES) merged with Academic Coaching for Excellence (ACE), and was rebranded as Academic Coaching & Support Services (ACSS), a unit within CASA. ACSS offers specialized support for students experiencing academic difficulty, particularly those on Academic Alert, Academic Notice, returning from Academic Deferment, or otherwise identified as academically at risk.

To meet the varying needs of these students, ACSS implements a tiered academic coaching model that includes:

- Academic Coaching Strategists (professional staff) who provide intensive, holistic, and intrusive support to students facing the most significant academic and personal challenges.
- CASA Graduate Coaches (master's and doctoral students) who support students in transition or early recovery through structured academic skill-building, resource connection and accountability coaching.
- CASA Peer Coaches (trained undergraduate students) who provide peer-to-peer coaching, and practical support on study strategies, time management, and resource navigation.

Each coaching tier is designed with tailored intervention strategies based on student profiles. For example:

- Students on Academic Notice engage in recovery plans, academic standing education, and frequent accountability check-ins.
- Students returning from Academic Deferment are assigned professional coaches and supported with reintegration plans, reflective goal-setting, and referrals to wraparound services.

This model ensures students receive support aligned with their academic standing and developmental needs, and that no student falls through the cracks due to limited capacity or misaligned services.

The reorganization was prompted by the university president's new strategic plan (ASCEND), which called for Academic Coaching to be made available to every student. The results are compelling: students who engage with ACSS demonstrate a retention rate of 84%, including those previously at risk of Academic Deferment.

Session Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand the rationale and steps involved in restructuring academic support services into a centralized student success unit.
2. Explore how a tiered academic coaching model can deliver targeted interventions aligned to different student populations and risk levels.
3. Learn strategies for implementing intrusive, holistic coaching that affirms student identity while promoting academic recovery.
4. Analyze data and outcome metrics to evaluate the impact of Academic Coaching & Support Services and guide future development.

This session is ideal for student success leaders, retention specialists, and academic support practitioners seeking innovative, data-informed approaches to serve high-need student populations.

Position Paper - Strategic Curriculum Investment: A Case Study on Cost Analysis and Best Practices in Secondary Math Curriculum Adoption

10:00 - 10:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Presentation type Position Paper
Rod Uzat

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199 Strategic Curriculum Investment: A Case Study on Cost Analysis and Best Practices in Secondary Math Curriculum Adoption

Ms. Kristin Albaugh[1], Dr. Rod Uzat[2]

[1]Midland ISD, Midland, Texas, USA. [2]UTPB, Odessa, Texas, USA

Abstract

This paper will offer an overview of the cost analysis process used by one Texas school district when deciding on a new secondary math curriculum. The study will focus on evidence of best practices in aligning instructional need, district priorities and financial responsibility.

The paper will address the following questions:

- What were the critical elements of the district's cost analysis process?
- What steps were taken to evaluate alignment between curriculum options and learning standards (i.e., Texas Essential Knowledge - TEKS), performance outcomes and district goals?
- How was the decision-making process impacted by stakeholder involvement?
- What best practices in curriculum adoption and cost analysis does this case study reveal?

In response to trends in secondary math performance data, one Texas school district's executive leadership team identified the need for a new math curriculum. The district initiated a structured, multi-phase cost analysis and stakeholder engagement process to ensure the selected curriculum would meet academic standards, support student achievement, and align with the district's mission and vision.

This qualitative analysis will include the documentation of the curriculum review process, meeting notes and agendas from the three committee sessions, cost-benefit analysis reports for each vendor, and interviews with key stakeholders.

This case study will contribute to the field of educational leadership by offering a model for integrating cost analysis with instructional decision-making. It will serve as a resource for district leaders seeking to balance academic rigor, fiscal responsibility, and community input in curriculum reform. (Copilot, personal communication, June 29, 2025)

Copilot. (2025, June 29). Contribution to the development of a case study proposal on curriculum cost analysis [Personal communication].

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Leadership Preparation & Development

10:00 - 10:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Miranda Allen

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46 Novice Teachers as Teacher Leaders: Quantitative Results from a Mixed Methods Study of Years of Experience and Teacher Leadership Development

Dr. Miranda Allen, Dr. Richard Shrubb

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, Louisiana, USA

Abstract

In the past, it was a common belief that for teachers to become leaders and affect a broader range of teachers and students, they had to seek a position as a school administrator. However, new perspectives on school leadership styles that embrace the distribution of leadership throughout the school organization have led to the emergence of teacher leadership. Since its introduction in the 1980s, teacher leadership has become recognized as an essential organizational component that enhances school effectiveness by empowering teachers. Today, teachers engage in leadership within and beyond their classrooms and schools, making enormous contributions as influencers of improved educational practice.

Although teacher leadership is an admirable goal for any educator to pursue, many administrators and experienced teachers perceive teacher leadership roles as best filled by educators with advanced levels of teaching experience, content knowledge, and instructional practice. However, experts in the field agree that novice or beginning teachers also have a lot to offer in terms of leadership potential, with the positive levels of enthusiasm and excitement they bring to the profession. Yet, novice teachers are often overlooked for these roles and are perceived as incapable of leadership due to their lack of years of professional teaching experience.

The aim of this research was to address the gap in the literature on novice teacher leadership development from the perspectives of novice teachers by examining how novice teachers develop as teacher leaders and engage in leadership practices. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used to identify the differences that years of experience may or may not have on the teacher leadership identity, readiness, and engagement of novice teachers in southern US public schools. Distributed leadership theory provided the theoretical lens, and Sinha and Hanuscin's (2017) Teacher Leadership Development Process Model was used as the conceptual framework.

Survey data were collected from 306 full-time pre-K through fifth-grade teachers from 71 public elementary schools. One-way ANOVAs were used to measure statistical differences between four subgroups based on teacher experience level. Factorial ANOVAs identified interactions between demographic and experience variables. A holistic case study with embedded units examined the perceptions of novice teachers, experienced peer teachers, and administrators during the qualitative phase of the study; however, the focus of this initial report centers around the robust quantitative findings.

Quantitative results showed that years of teaching experience have a significant effect on teacher leadership identity and engagement, but not on readiness to lead. The teacher leadership readiness factor of teacher autonomy is significantly affected by the type of teaching program, but that effect is not dependent on years of experience. When combined, years of teaching and the number of schools significantly affect teacher leadership identity. These combined variables also significantly impact teacher leadership engagement in school change and improvement, as well as in school and district curriculum work and the professional development of colleagues.

Overall, this study provides new evidence to support the equal distribution of teacher leadership roles to all teachers, not just those with higher levels of professional teaching experience.

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164 Understanding Teacher Leadership: Preparation, Practice, and Perception in a Statewide Study

Dr. Leigh Ann McMullan, Dr. Paula Tharp, Dr. Anna Daher

Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS, USA

Abstract

Abstract

Teacher leadership is not a novel concept—educators have long assumed leadership roles within their own classrooms. However, the evolution of teacher leadership as a broader identity that extends influence beyond the classroom has drawn increasing attention amid heightened accountability pressures in school districts across the United States. While the prevalence of teacher leadership has grown, ambiguity persists regarding its definition, scope, and impact. Research over the past few decades has documented various pathways through which teachers develop leadership capacities, including formal preparation programs, professional development, and both formal and informal leadership roles (Calik et al., 2012; Danielson, 2006; Fairman & McKenzie, 2012; Hunzicker, 2012; Kiranh, 2013). Nevertheless, the field still grapples with inconsistent understandings of what constitutes teacher leadership, how teachers are prepared, and how their roles influence educational outcomes (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2009; Poetter, 2014).

This presentation explores a mixed methods research study that investigates how teachers develop a leadership identity through a formal preparation program and how they experience and enact teacher leadership in diverse school contexts across a single state. The study aims to provide insight into how leadership identities are cultivated and sustained, how roles are perceived and implemented, and how systemic and contextual factors influence the teacher leadership experience. By examining both qualitative and quantitative data, the study seeks to deepen understanding of teacher leadership as a dynamic and context-dependent construct.

Ultimately, this presentation will contribute to ongoing conversations about teacher leadership by offering empirical findings and practical implications for how schools and districts can support teachers in developing meaningful leadership roles that positively impact school communities.

Literature Review - Middle School Educators' Perceptions of Learner Engagement in an Online Learning Environment

10:00 - 10:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Presentation type Literature Review
Stephanie Cheramie

220 Middle School Educators' Perceptions of Learner Engagement in an Online Learning Environment

-- Stephanie Cheramie

University of Louisiana Monroe, Monroe, Louisiana, USA

Abstract

As online education programs continue to increase globally, the methods of how online students can be successful is of interest to parents, online education teachers, and school organizations. At present, few researchers have attempted to identify the instructional strategies that are conducive to increasing student engagement in middle school students in online learning, which could prevent students from overcoming challenges and achieving success virtually.

Engagement is important to learning because online learners have fewer opportunities to interact with the instructor, instruction material, and their peers (Beasley, 2022). Previous research has identified areas of concern of online instruction that could obstruct engagement including a shortage of in-depth support needed by students (Chisadza et al., 2021). The study of engagement is important because engaged students are better learners which directly affects success, signifying the importance of the study of engagement (Caybit, 2022; Padilla Rodriguez et al., 2020; Siobhan et al., 2024). Literature in online education acknowledges challenges students face in online learning, however, there is a lack of focus on teachers' perceptions of student engagement addressing their responsibility of management and teaching strategies, such as appropriate digital tools, that are essential to increasing the engagement within the learning environment (Moskovich & Hershkovitz, 2024).

This research seeks to examine the perceptions of virtual teachers who can give insight into the barriers students face. Overall, research on teachers' perspectives and the practices used in online education, especially at the elementary level, was the least comprehensive when compared to secondary and higher education (Liao et al., 2021). Research in online learning indicates that for it to be effective, a myriad of factors must be in place: parental involvement, teacher support, motivation, and engagement (Curtis & Werth, 2015; Harrington & DeBruler, 2021; Louwrens & Hartnett, 2015; Watkins, et al., 2002).

The rapid expansion of online education has significantly transformed the landscape of modern schooling, particularly in the K-12 sector, where traditional learning models have been increasingly supplemented or replaced by digital platforms. Online education has experienced incredible growth over the last decade, and it has become a foundational element of education, especially the K-12 sector (Lu et al., 2024 & Watson et al., 2013). The shift brought on by a need to instruct students virtually has led many educational institutions to shift from a traditional classroom setting to teaching and learning occurring in an online educational setting (Carambas & Espique, 2023;

Najmudheen & Poonkodi, 2021). The effectiveness of online learning environments lies in the level of student engagement, because students who are actively engaged in digital instruction result in improved academic outcomes (Brown & Zian, 2024; Tang & Chaw, 2016). A lack of student engagement can lead to unsuccessful student outcomes (Griffin, 2014). The rapid growth of online education, particularly in the K-12 sector, underscores the critical importance of fostering student engagement in virtual learning environments to ensure academic success and improve overall educational outcomes. Building on the growing emphasis on student engagement in online education, it is essential to explore how the integration of technology can further enhance this engagement. Several advanced digital learning tools have been developed, as the demand for interactive learning environments has increased as a method to increase student engagement and performance (Quadir & Yang, 2024). Research into digital learning tools such as mobile apps, virtual labs, learning management systems, augmented reality, artificial intelligence driven tools, and collaboration mediums illustrate the increasing role of these tools in enhancing educational outcomes across a multitude of disciplines (Miller & Clement, 2018; Lai & Hwang, 2019; Ally & Tsinakos, 2020; Kuo & Bellend, 2021; Harrison & Butcher, 2022; Wang & May, 2023; Cai & Kuo, 2023).

Symposium - Student Persistence: Factors Impacting College Students' Success

10:00 - 10:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Amany Saleh

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79 Student Persistence: Factors Impacting College Students' Success

Dr. Amany Saleh[1], Dr. Ali Khalil[2], Dr. Darla Keel[3], Dr. Paula Rose-Greer[1]

[1]Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, AR, USA. [2]Community College of Rhodes Island, Providence, Rhodes Island, USA. [3]University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

Introduction

College students’ persistence has been a concern for higher education institutions for decades. Persistence refers to students’ ability to remain successfully enrolled in an

academic program at a college or a university beyond their second year. Low persistence rates among college students have social and economic ramifications for them and for future generations. It also has financial implications for academic institutions since students' tuition and fees have become essential for the survival of any higher education institution.

Burke (2019) argues college students' persistence must be addressed through both academic and social systems. He advances universities need to invest in creating a healthy institutional culture that promote students' services, engagement, and innovations to increase students' commitment. Meanwhile, institutions need to be cognizant of students' demographics and backgrounds which impact their decision to persist.

Objectives of the Session

This symposium includes three research reports and a theoretical piece shedding light on the most effective policies and practices that ensures students' academic persistence, especially minority-at risk- students. "Minority," here, refers to students with special needs, African American, Hispanic, and international students on an F1 student visa. The researchers examine minority students' views of the policies and practices that their institutions employed to help them persist.

Overview of the Presentation

The presenters share their research findings and engage session attendees in a lively discussion on best practices in students' success and persistence. The authors conducted empirical research to elicit the views of *minority* students', as defined above, of how their universities and community colleges helped them persist in their educational pursuits.

One author surveyed college students with special needs, at a four-year public university, about their perceptions of their institutional services in helping them persist. Another researcher conducted a study at three public universities and three public community colleges where he elicited students' opinions of the factors that influenced their decision to enroll and persist in their chosen institution. In another study, the researchers interviewed international students from public universities to better

understand their lived experiences during the pandemic and how their public higher education institutions helped them persist and return to campus. In a conceptual piece, the author relied on her extensive experience as a student services expert to share policies and practices that enhance students' persistence. She discusses ways to eliminate pitfalls students encounter with admission, housing, and enrollment.

Scholarly Significance

Sharing the findings of these scholarly works can help higher education leaders and policy makers adopt and implement practices that address racial and socioeconomic variables that impact students' success and construct educational possibilities for minority students.

Structure of the Session

The session will include four papers from different scholars sharing their research findings regarding college students' persistence. The authors will present their findings and share ideas with session participants to develop a comprehensive framework that addresses college students' success and persistence.

References

Burke, A. (2019). Student Retention Models in Higher Education: A Literature Review. *College and University Review,* 94 (2), 12-21.

Training - Restorative Practices and the Power of Mattering in K-12 Education

10:00 - 10:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Presentation type Training
Charlotte Parham

50 Restorative Practices and the Power of Mattering in K–12 Education

Dr. Charlotte Parham, Dr. Thomas Bruick

University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

Restorative practices have emerged as transformative approaches to discipline and relationship-building in K–12 education, promoting community, accountability, and healing. Central to their effectiveness is the concept of *mattering*—the psychological experience of feeling valued and adding value within a community. This training explores the intersection of restorative practices and mattering, emphasizing how inclusive dialogue, active listening, and collective problem-solving reinforce students' sense of belonging and self-worth. When students feel that they matter, they are more likely to engage positively with peers, staff, and learning. By embedding the concept of mattering into the foundation of restorative practices, schools can create equitable environments that reduce conflict, improve student outcomes, and foster holistic development. This training outlines current research and practical strategies for integrating mattering into restorative practices to support a more just and empathetic school culture.

RiP Lecture - Artificial Wisdom and Intelligence

11:00 - 11:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Lecture)
Laura Norman

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208 Evaluating Artificial Wisdom in Supporting Human Decision Making

Ms. Nancy Florida, Mr. Sayed In Abdullah, Ms. Leila Kargaripadar, Dr. Mehdi Ghahremani

Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi, USA

Abstract

1. Research problem or objectives

Artificial wisdom (AW) represents the evolving technologies of AI in providing solutions to real-world problems and supporting ethical decision-making by applying knowledge and abilities to achieve a common good. (Jeste et al., 2020; Sternberg et al., 2024;

Sternberg & Dashtaki, 2024). Although AI relies heavily on data driven computational models rather than experiential and emotional processes (Johnson et al., 2024; Xu et al., 2023), this research aims to investigate how wisdom is reflected on AI's responses and explore how these responses influence people in decision making processes. It promotes interdisciplinary and reflective inquiry across the P-20 systems to help educators and learners critically and ethically integrate AI in education. By understanding these dynamics, educators can better integrate AI technologies into learning environments, promoting critical thinking and ethical decision-making among students.

2. Theoretical or conceptual framework

Human Wisdom vs Artificial Wisdom

Wisdom is a developmental process, driven by experience that can be gained through age or education (Karami et al., 2024), and this experiential aspect poses a unique challenge for its adaptation by AI technologies. The advancement of AI can transform the traditional way to achieve wisdom by augmenting and enhancing human decision processes due to AI's infrastructure layer which includes big data, storage and computing power, ML algorithms, and AI frameworks (Xu et al., 2021; Matli, 2024). Although the AI system lacks genuine self-awareness, they have sophisticated abilities to mimic experiential learning and reflective processes, with safe responses due to Reinforcement Learning from Human Feedback (RLHF) (Dai et al., 2023).

AI in Decision Making

Decision making is an essential competency both in academic and professional life, especially in navigating uncertainty (Al Maqbali & Tahir, 2024). As AI becomes more integrated into our daily life, individual increasingly rely on its suggestions, highlighting AI's role grows not only to provide information but also cognitive support in solving complex dilemmas (Lockey et al, 2021; Wang et al, 2023).

However, AI systems may have cognitive limitations. Studies shown that large language models (LLM) like GPT-4 can either align with or diverge from human decision patterns depending on the prompts (Nobandegani et al, 2024). The study found that GPT-4 was successfully demonstrated in the case of Allais Paradox (decision making under risk) but failed in the case of Ellsberg paradox (decision making under uncertainty), underscoring the need to examine AI as a wise decision-making assistant.

3. Research question(s) and relevant literature

This research aims to answer: 1) to what extent do AI-generated responses to real world problems reflect wisdom, and 2) how do these AI responses influence people in decision making? Relevant literature covers transformational wisdom, Perception of Wisdom Exploratory Rating (POWER) scale, and human-AI interactions in decision support.

4. Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry

This research will adopt a mixed-methods design. In the first phase, we will do a content analysis. We will rate 31 AI generated responses to 5 wisdom-related scenarios (Sternberg & Dashtaki, 2024) using a POWER scale (Karami, et al., 2024). The rubric used 6-points Likert scale to measure dimensions like: knowledge, moral maturity, tolerance for uncertainty, openness, sound judgment, and creativity. We took out the self-regulation dimension to assess these responses due to lack of genuine self-awareness.

Second phase, the same scenarios will be presented to undergraduate students, who will provide initial responses. Afterward, they will review the AI-generated responses and complete a survey designed to capture changes in their decision, confidence, and trust in the AI device. Instruments used are AI Attitude Scale (AIAS) and Melbourne Decision Making Questionnaires (MDMQ).

5. Data sources, evidence, objects, or materials

There are two data sources in this study, including 31 AI-generated responses and questionnaires data from 100 undergraduate students. To assess artificial wisdom, the POWER scale was applied, and to measure students' decision-making processes, AIAS, MDMQ, and customized open-ended questions were used. Together, these sources provide both qualitative and quantitative evidence for analysis.

6. Preliminary or anticipated findings

Preliminary findings show AI performed strongly in three dimensions of wisdom like creativity (m = 5.34), moral maturity and sound judgement (m = 4.59) and openness (m = 4.52). Meanwhile the lowest scores were found in knowledge (m = 3.72) and tolerance of uncertainty (m = 2.82). This result indicates that AI has a strong ability to generate creative ideas, ethical and logical reasoning. However, their performances decline when tasks require uncertainty or unpredictable situations. This finding suggests that artificial wisdom has a capability in simulating certain dimensions of human wisdom but remains limited in its ability to manage the ambiguity. These limitations align with Matli (2024), who underscore the importance of critically examining AI responses to maintain a balanced relationship between AI and human wisdom, ultimately enhancing decision-making.

As for the anticipated findings, participants are likely to take AI's advice as trustworthy and will rely on it more, especially when they are not sure about the situation. The degree of influence may vary depending on the perceived wisdom in the AI's response.

7. Scholarly significance or anticipated contribution to the field

This research promotes critical inquiry into human-AI interaction and ethical decision-making, which is an evolving and timely educational concern. By validating the POWER

scale as a tool in measuring artificial wisdom, the study bridges the fields of education, psychology, and human-AI interactions into P-20 educational settings, including areas like digital literacy. This research tends to support the development of lifelong researchers who can navigate and shape the evolution of AI's role in society.

8. Anticipated progress or next steps prior to the Annual Meeting

This Research in Progress (RiP) is expected to complete several milestones, including the final round of data collection from undergraduate students, statistical analysis on survey results, and the completion of manuscript draft. The manuscript will be prepared for the publication or presentation at relevant academic forum.

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247 Do AI Think Like Us? A Qualitative Study of Problem Solving in Large Language Models Using Mental Framework Theory

Ms. Leila Kargaripadar, Mr. Sayed In Abdullah, Ms. Nancy Florida, Dr. Mehdi Ghahremani

Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi, USA

Abstract

This submission is intended as a **Research-in-Progress (RiP)** presentation.

1. Research Problem or Objectives

As artificial intelligence (AI) systems such as large language models (LLMs) become more integrated into education and professional tasks, their ability to simulate human-like reasoning in real-world problems has attracted attention. Existing evaluation methods often focus on accuracy or fluency rather than examining the extent to which AI-generated responses reflect deeper human cognitive structures like adaptive intelligence (Sternberg, Landy, & Long, 2024).

This study explores how well LLMs mirror human cognition when solving complex problems, using the Theory of Mental Frameworks (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2023) as an analytic lens. Specifically, it compares standard prompting with self-consistency prompting (Wang et al., 2023) to assess whether structured prompting better evokes transdisciplinary thinking, holonic reasoning, meaning-making, and the five cognitive pillars.

This research supports the MSERA 2025 theme of fostering lifelong inquiry by exploring how educators and learners can critically engage with AI not just as a tool for

automation, but as a reflective partner in complex reasoning and problem-solving. By examining how AI mirrors or deviates from human cognitive structures, the study invites educators to reimagine curriculum and instruction in a world shaped by intelligent systems.

2. Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The analysis is grounded in the Theory of Mental Frameworks, which identifies four core cognitive elements: (1) transdisciplinary thinking (Nicolescu, 2002), (2) holonic reasoning, (3) meaning-making (Kegan, 1982), and (4) the five foundational pillars of cognition—symbols, patterns, relationships, categories, and order (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2023). These structures provide a comprehensive lens to evaluate AI reasoning against human cognitive benchmarks. This framework aligns with educational goals of fostering adaptive, ethical, and integrative thinking (Luckin, 2018).

3. Research Questions and Relevant Literature

The primary research question guiding this study is: To what extent do LLM responses reflect the cognitive structures defined in the Theory of Mental Frameworks, especially when using self-consistency prompting? A secondary question explores how AI-generated responses differ in cognitive richness between standard prompting and self-consistency prompting methods. These questions aim to assess whether structured prompting strategies can evoke deeper, more human-like reasoning patterns aligned with key cognitive dimensions such as transdisciplinary thinking, holonic reasoning, and meaning-making.

Sternberg (2024) introduce eleven real-world problem scenarios designed to assess adaptive intelligence through ethical, practical, and analytical reasoning. These serve as stimuli for evaluating LLMs. Wang (2023) demonstrate that self-consistency prompting enhances coherence and reasoning depth in LLMs, providing a strategy for eliciting higher-order thinking. The use of a cognitive framework for analyzing AI reasoning contributes to human-centered AI assessment.

4. Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

A qualitative research design was employed. Thirty-one publicly available LLMs were tested on 11 problem-solving scenarios adapted from Sternberg (2024) under standard prompting. Responses were manually collected and imported into QDA Miner Lite.

Self-consistency prompting will be applied in the next stage by generating five responses per scenario and prompting the model to select the most coherent one. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) will be conducted using codes from the Theory of Mental Frameworks. Additional inductive codes may emerge based on the data.

5. Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

The primary dataset includes 341 AI-generated responses (31 LLMs × 11 scenarios) under standard prompting. Responses are analyzed sentence by sentence to capture nuanced reasoning patterns. Once the self-consistency data is generated, it will be stored and coded separately to allow comparison between prompting conditions. NVivo or similar software will support thematic coding and model comparison.

6. Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Early analysis suggests that LLMs display more coherent and human-like reasoning when using self-consistency prompting. These responses show greater alignment with the components of the Theory of Mental Frameworks, particularly in meaning-making and systems-level thinking. In contrast, standard prompts often yield more literal or surface-level answers. The study anticipates that prompting design affects the quality of AI reasoning.

7. Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution

This study offers a novel application of the Theory of Mental Frameworks to evaluate AI reasoning. It provides evidence that self-consistency prompting enhances the cognitive depth of LLM responses. Additionally, it offers insights into how AI can serve as an educational tool that fosters human-like reasoning and introduces a qualitative methodology for analyzing AI problem-solving at the sentence level. These contributions are valuable to scholars in education, psychology, and AI ethics, and inform the development of more cognitively aligned AI systems. Findings may also impact curriculum design in higher education and gifted education programs, particularly those integrating AI tools to enhance critical thinking and ethical reasoning.

8. Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Prior to the Annual Meeting

All standard-prompt responses have been collected and coded. The next steps include implementing self-consistency prompting across all 31 models using the same 11 scenarios. These responses will be stored and analyzed separately in parallel with the existing dataset. As coding proceeds, additional inductive themes may emerge. Final steps include documenting ethical considerations related to transparency and responsible AI usage. This study is being conducted under IRB oversight at Mississippi State University.

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RiP Lecture - School Culture, Secondary Education, Leadership

11:00 - 11:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Lecture)
Stephanie Robinson

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2 The Impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training for Faculty to Improve Workplace Culture

Ms. Tanya St. Julien, Dr. Jonathan S. Elmore

Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, La., USA

Abstract

The Impact of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training for Faculty to Improve Workplace Culture

Research problem or objectives

Higher education institutions have implemented diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training to improve workplace culture and inclusiveness amongst culturally diverse faculty. The research investigates employee's workplace culture experiences at a community college in South Louisiana before, during, and after diversity, equity, and inclusion training. Improving intergroup relations continues to pose challenges because of prejudicial attitudes and discrimination against historically marginalized groups (Brauer, Dumesnil, & Campbell, 2021).

Theoretical or conceptual framework

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training was not a priority for higher education institutions prior to 2020. The institutional climate and culture must align with its mission to ensure campuses are inclusive, diverse, accessible, and equitable (Piggott & Cariaga-Lo, 2019). According to Riley (2021), diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives ramped up after the George Floyd riots where a Colombia college professor stated that universities must take partial responsibility for not having diversity, equity, and inclusion in college curriculum and teaching methods. Promoting diversity and inclusion in the educational setting entails recognizing sources that include both pride and prejudice of marginalized groups (Moreu, Isenberg, & Brauer, 2021).

Research question(s) and relevant literature

Research Question: What is the impact, if any, of implementing diversity training for faculty to improve the culture on campus at a Louisiana community college?

Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry

The community college has conducted an employee experience and engagement survey, including employees from all eight units over the past three years, 2022 – 2024. The human resources department collaborated with leaders from each unit and the diversity, equity, and inclusion council to design activities and future initiatives to maintain positive workplace experiences. During 2022 – 2023, the community college mandated diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) training for all employees. The research aims to provide a secondary analysis of the employee engagement survey results from the past three academic years: 2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024. The researcher will compare results from 2022-2023 when the diversity, equity, and inclusion training was mandated to the academic years prior and after. Higher education institutions facing challenges with negative experiences for faculty and staff in the workplace environment can benefit from the research. The research questions and hypotheses examine the impact that diversity, equity, and inclusion training had on workplace culture.

Data sources, evidence, objects, or materials

The researcher will utilize data from a third-party professional organization (Studer Education) who has conducted workplace experience surveys at the researcher's institution since 2016. Another data source is diversity, equity, and inclusion survey data from the human resource department.

Preliminary or anticipated findings

The researcher anticipates the data will reveal faculty knowledge and awareness increased and contributed to improvements in workplace culture experiences after diversity, equity, and inclusion training.

Scholarly significance or anticipated contribution to the field

The research can provide institutions with effective training methods needed to address bias, improve workplace culture, and ensure the inclusion of all employees.

Anticipated progress or next steps prior to the Annual Meeting

The researcher plans to obtain IRB approval, defend the proposal in the summer, and complete the research prior to the annual meeting.

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47 How Policy, Politics, and Personal Agendas Affect the Search Process for Academic Leaders

Ms. Stephanie Robinson

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA, USA

Abstract

How Policy, Politics, and Personal Agendas Affect the Search Process for Academic Leaders

Research Problem and Objectives

Academic leadership hiring processes in higher education remain complex, despite the established hiring procedures. These processes are often influenced by internal and external factors such as policies, politics, and personal agendas. These factors affecting hiring decisions frequently lead to a poor fit, conflicts, and even short tenures.

This research aims to explore how policy, politics, and personal agendas affect the search process for academic leaders. The goal of this study is to propose strategies that will create a fairer and more effective hiring process in higher education.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The foundation for this study is Institutional Theory, which examines how social norms, rules, and cultural expectations shape organizational behavior. Institutional theory suggests that organizations often adopt structures and practices not just for efficiency, but to gain legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This is relevant to my study, as this framework will guide my investigation into why certain practices persist, why search efficacy is limited, and why hiring differences often lead to controversy.

Research Questions and Relevant Literature

The following research questions will guide my study:

1. How do political pressures from stakeholders impact the selection process for academic leaders?
2. How do specific policies affect the selection of academic leaders?
3. How do competing interests among stakeholders affect the selection of academic leaders?

The literature on examining how policy, politics, and personal agendas influence the search process for academic leaders identifies challenges, such as how institutional norms and notions of “fit” in hiring serve as symbolic compliance, and how legitimacy and conformity shape organizational behavior (White-Lewis, 2020; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Factors beyond qualifications, such as biases, external influences, and stakeholder interests, often impact the hiring process (Harvey et al., 2013; Neitz, 2018; Simama, 2024). This literature helps to understand how some hiring processes are flawed and why change is needed in selecting leaders in higher education.

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

This study will be a mixed-methods study, as defined by Creswell (2009). The primary site(s) include two public four-year higher education institutions in the southern United States. The data will be collected through surveys with committee members, and if participants allow, interviews will be conducted. Direct observations of hiring practices will also be conducted if feasible. Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) framework will be used for data analysis to ensure that themes and patterns will be identified in leadership selection.

An Alpha test will be conducted to ensure the face validity of the survey items. A Beta test will then be conducted to further assess the survey's effectiveness before the full data collection

Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

Data collection will include surveys, interviews, and observations (if feasible). A researcher-developed survey will be based on findings within existing literature on how politics, policy, and personal agendas affect the search process for academic leaders.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Preliminary findings will likely suggest that colleges and universities often select leaders based on external and internal pressures, such as politics, reputation, or meeting certain expectations, rather than on who is the most qualified. In many cases, decisions may be made to satisfy institutional norms rather than to fix deeper problems.

Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution to the Field

This study makes a significant contribution to higher education by offering recommendations for aligning leadership searches with institutional goals and minimizing the gap between policies and practices. By developing fair and transparent leadership selection processes, institutions can maintain stakeholder trust and ensure that leadership transitions support the mission and long-term success (Frazer & Hunt, 2011; Simama, 2024).

Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Prior to the Annual Meeting

By the time of the Annual Meeting in November 2025, I anticipate having completed my Alpha test of my study. Between now and the conference, the following steps are tentatively scheduled:

- Finalization of survey items and alignment with relevant literature. (Fall 2025)
- IRB approval from both study sites (Fall 2025)
- Completion of Alpha and Beta testing of the survey instrument. (Late Fall to early Winter 2025)

Data has not been collected, and I have no outcomes to report at this time.

Reference List:

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218 Validity and Reliability Analysis of a Sentence-Level High School Reading Comprehension Screener

Ms. Brandi MacDonald

Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN, USA

Abstract

Few tools exist that assess secondary reading comprehension skills efficiently and effectively in a group setting with enough sensitivity to guide classroom instruction. Between grades 4 and 12, students are expected to comprehend complex academic text. Text complexity increases significantly over time. For example, sentence length increases from an average of 13 to 25 words and includes increased structure complexity (Balthazar & Scott, 2023). Thus, adolescent readers need to have internalized sentence-level syntax to meet the increased academic demands required in high school and beyond. It is imperative, therefore, to understand which sentence-level syntactic structures contribute to text complexity, and how and to what level these structures contribute to the comprehension of complex academic text.

By the time students begin secondary school, language comprehension plays a larger role in overall reading comprehension than decoding, yet a relatively small body of research exists which explores adolescent language comprehension, and as students advance through the grades, the research becomes sparser (Reynolds, 2021). The Reading Systems Framework (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014) identifies three knowledge areas fundamental to comprehension, one of which, the lexicon pathway, includes parsing of syntactic constituents.

Kintsch's (1988) Construction-Integration (C-I) model defines sentence reading as the process of constructing meaning by making a series of predictions based on analysis of syntactic rules, and in this way, readers build a "net," sentence by sentence, to strengthen comprehension of connected text. Building on Kintsch's C-I model, Dennis' (2004) syntagmatic paradigmatic (SP) model envisions sentence-level comprehension processing as one that relies on memory retrieval and is predicated on the relationships that exist between words.

Tong et al. (2024) found a positive correlation between sentence-level instruction and K-12 reading comprehension (r = .54) which increased at higher grades. There is a great deal of convergence in the research regarding the specific syntactic structures that commonly occur in academic text, though there has not always been a common language to refer to these structures. Identified structures include ***various clauses, including left- or center-embedded, adverbial, and relative clauses*** (Sarmiento & Truckenmiller, 2024; Balthazar & Scott, 2023; Deng et al., 2022; Zipoli, 2017; Uccelli et al., 2014; Scott, 2009***), noun modifiers/noun phrases*** (Deng et al., 2022; Uccelli et al., 2014), ***passive voice*** (Balthazar & Scott, 2023; Deng et al., 2022; Zipoli, 2017; Uccelli et al., 2014; Scott, 2009***);*** and ***cohesive ties*** (Sarmiento & Truckenmiller, 2024; Townsend et al., 2023; Uccelli et al., 2014).

This secondary, sentence-level reading comprehension screener research endeavors to synthesize the existing body of research conducted in adolescent sentence-level instruction to answer the following questions:

1. Is the secondary sentence-level syntactic reading comprehension screener reliable as measured by a metric of internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha)?
2. Does the secondary sentence-level syntactic reading comprehension screener predict reading comprehension ability in high school students?
3. Which syntactic skills better predict reading comprehension as measured by the PSAT?

After obtaining approval from the IRB and school district, parental consent and student assent forms were collected, and the screener was administered in February 2025 to freshman students (N = 103) at an urban New Hampshire high school. The researcher administered the screener during students' English 1 or Freshman Writing period, and each session lasted approximately forty minutes. Students at this high school are assigned Chromebooks, so the researcher administered the screener using the Formative online platform previously approved by the school district. The screener was designed to terminate after thirty minutes, and incomplete responses were automatically recorded as incorrect.

The reading comprehension screener is divided into six sections, each containing five items designed to assess a single syntactic constituent for a total possible overall raw score of 30. After answering several demographic questions, students were led through the following subsections, each with a raw score range of 0 – 5: sentence identification (M = 2.17, SD = 1.3); ellipted text (M = 4.13, SD = .967); complex clauses and phrases (M = 2.5, SD = 1.1); connective text (M = 3.17, SD = 1.175); sentence combining (M = 2.73, SD = 1.67); and pronouns (M = 3.77, SD = 1.345). Scores for each subsection as well as total overall score (M = 18.48, SD = 5.42) were collected for analysis.

Study participants (N = 84) also took the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) 8-9, which is administered to the freshman cohort in spring. The PSAT 8-9 reports an overall reading and writing (RW) score as well as four RW subsections: Information and Ideas; Craft & Structure; Expression of Ideas; and Standard English Conventions. The

next steps are to consider the validity and reliability of the measure. First, to consider the concurrent construct validity of the measure, we will conduct Pearson's correlations among the total score of the measure, subtest scores, and the PSAT 8-9. Next, we will consider reliability of the screener using Cronbach's alpha, and concurrent validity will be considered based on subsection data and correlations with the overall and subsection scores of the PSAT 8-9.

This research will contribute to the extant body of knowledge regarding secondary reading comprehension and yield a sentence-level syntactic screening tool that educators can administer easily to groups of students which is easily translatable into classroom instruction. In the future, IRT will be used to consider which subtests and items are the most useful in predicting reading comprehension and statistical information will be analyzed to make any necessary alterations to the screener.

Training-Research on the Science of Reading- Implications for Diverse Learners in K-12 Classrooms

11:00 - 11:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Tanya Kennedy

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174 Research on the Science of Reading – Implications for Diverse Learners in K-12 Classrooms

Dr. Tanya Kennedy

Union University, Memphis, TN, USA. Memphis Shelby County Schools, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

Research on effective literacy instruction has led to the evolution of the Science of Reading, aimed at determining the best methods for teaching children how to read. Historically, much of the research on best practices in reading instruction, including the Science of Reading, focused on native English speakers, often neglecting the unique cultural and linguistic differences of diverse learners. This conceptual research delves into innovative strategies for preparing teachers who work with diverse learners, including Multilingual Learners, to implement the Science of Reading in K-12 classrooms. A comprehensive timeline of reading research, also known as The Reading Wars or The Great Debate, will be highlighted. The pedagogy on the Science of Reading and second language acquisition will be explained alongside the fundamental

principles for best instructional practices that support the language and literacy development of diverse learners. The research will detail the five pillars of the Science of Reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, coupled with the process of acquiring a second language. The necessary instructional support needed for diverse learners, including Marginalized and Multilingual Learners, to access these principles effectively will also be addressed. Practical, hands-on approaches will be provided for teachers of all skill levels, enabling them to adapt their lessons and enhance language and literacy development for diverse learners.

Mentors Committee's Session 2: Writing for Publication: Tips from the MSERA Mentors Committee on Getting Published

11:00 - 11:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Presentation type Mentor Session
Larry Daniel

The MSERA Mentors Committee members will share their insights as authors, editorial board members, and editors on the process of developing manuscripts, working with editors, and seeing manuscripts through to publication. Approximately 40% of the session time will be devoted to Q&A with participants.

Symposium - Call Me MiSTER at Grambling State University

11:00 - 11:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
George Noflin

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97 Call Me MiSTER at Grambling State Univeristy

Ms. Tyra Muhammad, Dr. George Noflin

Grambling State University, Grambling, LA, USA

Abstract

Grambling State University (GSU) partnered with Clemson University to establish the GSU Call Me MiSTER Program. The original CMM Program was founded at Clemson in 2000 with MiSTER as an acronym for **M**entors **I**nstructing **S**tudents **T**oward **E**ffective **R**ole models.

The GSU CMM Program directly addresses Teacher Preparation. The Program's over-arching vision is to increase the number of male students who become educators in the state of Louisiana. The program implements proven practices which effectively impact the national teacher shortage by enhancing the placement and retention of these male teachers in elementary, middle, and high schools. The GSU CMM Program focuses on four key goals—Recruitment, Retention, Collaboration and, Graduation/Employment. These goals have been carried out through curricular and co-curricular activities including: Living-Learning Community, scholarships, academic coaches, summer internships, community partnerships, mentoring/professional development, and service learning.

There have been several recent challenges to maintain the program. In spite of all of the challenges we have faced, Grambling State University remains the largest MiSTER Program in the state and arguably in the country.

Training - Preparing Teachers to Teach AI: A Call to Action for Teacher Educators

11:00 - 11:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Presentation type Training
Samir Patel

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103 Preparing Teachers to Teach AI: A Call to Action for Teacher Educators

Dr. Jessica Pryor, Dr. Samir Patel

Murray State University, Murray, KY, USA

Abstract

This presentation will explore the integration of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in teacher education, with a specific focus on preparing future educators to teach GenAI concepts and tools to P-12 students in developmentally appropriate ways. As GenAI continues to transform daily life, work, and learning, its relevance in education is no longer optional—it is essential. GenAI integration is now a staple across academic disciplines and career sectors. Consequently, P-12 educators must not only understand how to use GenAI to enhance instructional planning and efficiency, but they must also be equipped to guide students in becoming responsible, ethical, and critical users of GenAI technologies.

Teacher educators have a pivotal role in this process. Whether they are providing professional development to current teachers or training the next generation of teachers, all must be prepared to address not just how GenAI impacts their professional work, but also how to scaffold AI-related learning at different developmental stages. P-12 educators come to AI with varying levels of experience. This session draws on practical experience to help participants scaffold their teaching/program to meet the unique needs of each P-12 educator to encourage confidence in their GenAI integration in the classroom.

The educational content in this session draws on experiential learning, case studies, and emerging research in AI and teacher education. The target audience includes teacher educators, P-12 educators, and graduate students enrolled in teacher preparation programs. Through a primarily didactic format, with opportunities for dialogue and reflection, the session will examine practical strategies for embedding AI literacy and ethical awareness into teacher education curricula.

Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of what GenAI integration can look like in teacher education. The session will provide concrete strategies for developing tailored approaches that support P-12 educators as they learn to thoughtfully and ethically integrate GenAI into their classrooms, regardless of their prior experience. Ultimately, this session aims to inspire teacher educators to see AI not as a peripheral add-on, but as an essential component of preparing future-ready educators and, by extension, future-ready students.

MSERF Foundation Board of Directors Meeting

12:00 - 14:00 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES

Open to MSERF Board of Directors and Invited Guests Only

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Research Methodology & Evaluation

14:00 - 14:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Larry Daniel

206 Bringing the Debate on Statistical Significance Testing Back to Educational Research: What Have Statisticians and STEMM Researchers Added to the Conversation?

Dr. Larry Daniel

Anderson University, Anderson, SC, USA

Abstract

In this paper, I trace the history of critiques of null-hypothesis statistical significance testing over the last century, explore arguments of recent critics who have entered the conversation, and identify how the field of educational research should respond to these latest critics. Throughout history of its use, statistical significance testing has been rife with controversy. Critiques on the use and interpretation of statistical significance tests include: (a) failure to distinguish between statistically significant and important (i.e., practically significant) results; (b) misinterpreting statistical significance result to imply evidence of replicability; (c) misconstruing statistical significance to infer odds against a chance result; and (d) interpreting results only in terms of statistical significance without regard for magnitude of effect.

Thoughtful scholars have pointed out these and other issues with statistical significance testing for more than a century. Tyler (1931) was among the earliest critics of misuse of statistical significance in educational research, and many thoughtful scholars from education, psychology, and related disciplines elaborated on and extended early criticisms from the 1930s through the end of the 20th century. Critiques by social scientists reached a crescendo in the 1980s and 1990s, resulting in the American Psychological Association (1994) requiring in its *Publication Manual* (4th ed.) that authors include estimates of effect size to the extent possible along with results of statistical significance tests. Additionally, numerous education and psychology journals during that time period initiated requirements to report effect sizes in their guidelines for authors who report results of statistical significance tests.

Scholarship on the controversy was reignited in 2016 when the American Statistical Association (ASA) released its “Statement on p-Values.” The conversation was fueled, not this time, by social scientists, but largely by mathematical statisticians and STEMM scholars. Some statisticians expressed concern that, in light of the controversy, the general public could lose trust in quantitative analysis and in science in general. Some scholars and journals editors even called for the complete elimination of statistical significance testing. These views contrasted with earlier social scientists’ calls for reform focused on better interpretation rather than elimination. Interestingly, 5 years following ASA’s release of its statement, Matthews (2021) noted that some journals had changed editorial policies regarding significance testing and that the National Academy of Science had released a statement on the need for better training of researchers. However, Matthews (2021) added that the increase in dialogue has had little substantive change in practice by statisticians and STEMM scholars.

Following discussion and comment on the major threads of this latest conversation on the topic, I bring the attention back to social science research. I trace progress that has been made in social sciences, including the more than 50 educational and psychological journals and at least 20 professional research organizations that have adopted guidelines on use and interpretation of statistical significance testing. I call for renewed emphasis on correct interpretation of statistical significance in educational research. Further, I offer cautions against extreme positions, especially the call by some to eliminate statistical significance testing altogether.

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157 Undergraduate Research Experiences and their Relationship with Student Research Self-Efficacy: A Source-based Approach

Dr. Eli Jones[1], Dr. Leigh Harrell-Williams[1], Ms. Zaria Reed[1], Mr. Luke Walden[2]

[1]The University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA. [2]Union University, Jackson, TN, USA

Abstract

Background

Research experiences are an integral component in developing college students' research beliefs and expectations. Previous research incorporating suggests that mentored research experiences greatly enhance college students' research self-efficacy (RSE) and research outcome expectations (Jones et al. 2023). However, as previous research has not fully explored the relationship of research experiences with specific sources of research self-efficacy, we seek to know: What is the relationship between the four sources of research self-efficacy and the previous research experiences in which undergraduate students have participated?

Theoretical Framework

In the context of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT, Lent et al., 1994), RSE is a predictor of future career interest, goals, and activities. In turn, RSE develops as undergraduate students encounter specific learning experiences: (a) mastery experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, and (d) emotional affect. The more opportunities students have to engage in such learning experiences, the more likely they are to develop a strong sense of RSE.

Method

Data Source

We examine the responses from 504 undergraduate students who either (a) participated in an undergraduate educational psychology research course or (b) were

enrolled for at least four semesters in an program that required at least one research course. Students were asked to take the Sources of RSE (SRSE) scale (Authors, 2024). Participants were grouped based on the number of distinct research experience types in which they had participated: (a) none (n = 58), (b) one (n = 244), (c) two (n =146), or (d) three or more (n = 56).

Measures

Participants completed a survey made up of demographic questions, questions about the students' previous research experiences, the 20-item SRSE scale and the 8-item Research Outcomes Expectancy Questionnaire (ROEQ; Bieschke, 2000) in Qualtrics. The four subscales for the SRSE exhibited reasonable reliability($.81 \leq w \leq .88$).

Analysis

We conducted a MANOVA with the dependent variables being the four SRSE subscale averages (Mastery, Vicarious, Social, and Affect). The independent variable was the level of research experience participation. Following the MANOVA, we used linear discriminant analysis (LDA) to compare differences between groups.

Results

Students differed significantly among sources of RSE based on their prior research experiences (Wilks' $\lambda_{(12,\ 1315.23)} = 2.74$, $p < .001$) which represents a small effect ($\eta^2_p = .022$). At the univariate level, all subscales except for Emotional Affect were significantly different between prior learning experience groups, with the greatest effect on Mastery Experiences ($\eta^2_p = .051$). However, pairwise comparisons from the LDA indicated that differences were significant only for students with three or more research experiences compared with one or fewer experiences. The full paper will explore these differences as they relate to "mentored" research activities.

Conclusion

Research experiences may help to support student self-efficacy by providing a variety of learning experiences to undergraduates. Educators should seek to increase not only the number, but also the type of experience in which students engage. Future research should seek to explore the overall quality of common research experiences for undergraduates as they relate to the sources of RSE.

191 Accuracy of References in Top-Tier Educational Leadership Journals: Analysis and Comments for Improved Practice

Dr. Larry Daniel

Anderson University, Anderson, SC, USA

Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine the frequency and types of errors occurring in references included in articles in 2 top-tier Educational Leadership Journals, namely *School Leadership and Management* (*SLM*) and *Educational Administration Quarterly* (*EAQ*). These journals have 5-year impact factor scores of 3.1 and 4.4, respectively, and are consistently listed in the top quartile of journals in the field. All articles from volume years 2023 and 2024 of these journals that included a reference list served as the source for the data. Following a sampling strategy used in similar studies, a random number generator was used to select 2 references from the reference list of each of 144 articles, resulting in a sample of 228 references. References were checked against the original source and coded for errors in five categories: (a) journal name; (b) date, volume, issue, or page numbers; (c) author name(s); (d) article title; and (e) DOI.

At least one error was found in 64 (28%) of the references. Though lower than the 33% average error rate found in a scoping review of similar previous studies, the presence or errors in 1 of 4 references sampled is alarming. Errors were most prevalent in date, volume, issue, and or page numbers (n = 27) and in author names (n = 22), followed by errors in the DOI (n = 13), article title (n = 10), and journal name (n = 4). A one-way analysis of variance indicated a statistically significant difference ($F_{1,227} = 10.04$; $p < .05$) in total number of errors by journal, with the 128 *SLM* references having slightly more errors ($\mu = .59$; $\sigma = .97$) than *EAQ* ($\mu = .43$; $\sigma = .83$); however, the statistical effect size was small ($\eta^2 = .04$), indicating a negligible difference in errors across journals.

Though some errors were minor and would have a minimal impact on the appropriate attribution of the referenced source or the ability to locate the source (e.g., omission of an initial from the author's name); other errors were more significant (e.g., incorrect journal name) and could result in the inability to track the source correctly. Of the 13 references with DOI errors, 9 did not list the DOI, and the remaining 4 had an incorrect DOI link which resulted in a web search error when clicked or entered into a web search engine. The deleterious impact of reference errors to the quality of scholarship in educational leadership is discussed followed by advice to scholars on how to avoid making reference list errors. Advice includes always tracking an original source back to the online or hardcopy of the journal itself, avoiding copying sources from other articles, and not relying on independent referencing websites (e.g., Google Scholar) to provide accurate references.

RiP Lecture - Teaching Profession

14:00 - 14:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Presentation type Research-In-Progress (Lecture)
Ibrahim Duyar

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249 Cultivating a Lifelong Teacher Workforce: Understanding Gen Z's Pipeline to Education

Ms. Brittany Williams, Dr. Amanda Mayeaux

University of Louisiana at Lafayatte, Lafayette, LA, USA

Abstract

Research Problem or Objectives

According to the Louisiana-created Teacher Recruitment, Recovery, and Retention Task Force (2021), in the state of Louisiana, there has been a fluctuation of students enrolled in and graduating in teacher preparations programs with a specific decline in traditional preparation programs. The newest generation entering the workforce is Generation Z (Gen Z). Gen Z members deemed the "digital natives" were born between the late 1990s and early 2000s. Gen Z is more specifically defined, although defined differently, by different researchers (Andrea et al., 2016). When examining the students enrolled in college in Louisiana, most students fall into the category of Gen Z (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2025). With Gen Z being the majority of the students enrolled in college, it is important to look into reasons why there is a fluctuation and decrease in the enrollment and completion rates of students in teacher preparation programs. An analyzation also needs to be done to evaluate the programs and organizations in place with the goal of growing the teacher workforce.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

The current research contains a conceptual framework placing Gen Z members at the center of their career decision making specifically as it relates to the teaching profession. The choices Gen Z make are possibly shaped by their career aspirations and preferred work environment which intersects to guide individual Gen Z members to an educational or non-educational career pathway. When the aspirations and workplace preferences of Gen Z align with the characteristics of teaching, they may pursue an educational pathway that contributes to a strong teacher workforce. However, various barriers can discourage Gen Z from pursuing education, which leads to a decline in the teacher workforce. To address this, there are programs/organizations with a common

goal to grow the teacher workforce (i.e. Call Me MiSTER, Educators Rising, and Louisiana Pre-Educator Pathway). These supports aim to redirect individuals on non-educational pathways by increasing interest and engagement with the education field, ultimately encouraging more Gen Z individuals to reconsider and enter the teaching profession.

Research Question(s)

The overarching research question that is addressed in the literature review is:

How do Gen Z's career aspirations, work environment preferences, and perceptions of the teaching profession influence their interest in pursuing education as a career, and what strategies or organizations exist to increase their engagement in the field?

The individual research questions that are addressed in the literature review are:

1. What are the career aspirations of Gen Z?

2. What are the characteristics of the preferred work environment of Gen Z?

3. What factors discourage Gen Z from pursuing teaching as a future career option?

4. What programs and organizations are available to increase Gen Z's interest in education?

The future research based on the literature review is to study the effects of the programs/organizations that are present in Louisiana and the effects it has on Gen Z's interest in education as a career.

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

The literature review focuses on research related to career aspirations of Gen Z, characteristics of the preferred work environment of Gen Z, factors that discourage Gen Z from pursuing education as a career, and programs and organizations to increase interest in education as a career and are grouped by like theme. To find articles to be reviewed, Google Scholar, Web of Science Core Collection and the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (ULL) Online Library were utilized. Google Scholar was the primary search tool while the ULL Online Library was used to vet and acquire the resources found.

Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

The data used for the literature review portion of this research used a variety of credible sources. Sources included empirical, peer-reviewed scholarly articles, state education reports, and other informational sources. Most of the answers to the research questions were found using a wide variety of empirical, peer-reviewed scholarly articles. The

problem and background data were constructed mainly from state education reports through the Louisiana Board of Regents. Information about the programs/organizations to grow the teacher workforce largely consisted of an assortment of other information sources including program descriptions and institutional materials.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

Through the literature review, valuable information was analyzed about Gen Z. Within Gen Z, there is a prioritization of career advancements/opportunities, work-life balance, flexibility, the pursuit of personal interests, meaningful work, security, feedback, income, autonomy, leadership preferences, and work relationships when pursuing a career. Organizations that are currently active in Louisiana and other states nationwide to increase interest in the education field are Call Me MiSTER, Educators Rising, and the Louisiana Pre-Educator Pathway. Call Me MiSTER provides college students with an education degree path benefits such as scholarships and mentorship in return for a commitment to teach the same number of years that financial assistance is given (Jones et al., 2019). Educators Rising targets students from middle school to college, giving them opportunities and experiences related to education (Educators Rising, n.d.). The Louisiana Educator Pathway targets high school students, giving them a chance to take educator classes and clinical experiences (Louisiana Department of Education, n.d.).

Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution to the Field

After studying the effects of current programs and organizations in Louisiana with the purpose of growing the educator workforce, the anticipated results are to provide evidence of the positive, negative, or neutral impact of these initiatives on Gen Z students. With Gen Z students being the newest generation to enter the workforce and ultimately deciding on whether to pursue education, education and initiatives to grow the educator workforce must adapt to meet their unique needs.

117 Raising the Prestige and Professional Status of the Teaching Profession: The Role of Educational Leaders

Ms. Tanya Sullivan, Dr. Bryan McCoy

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, La, USA

Abstract

The teaching profession in many societies has suffered from unflattering societal perception alongside a constant increase of prestige in other occupations associated with wealth and material status (Hoyle, 2001; Fauziah et al., 2021). These negative attitudes toward teaching create challenging conditions for recruiting, retention, and maintaining motivation among existing teachers (Lankford et al., 2014). This decline has been caused by insufficient salaries, a negative perception of educators, a disproportionate and escalating work burden, and very little aid (Stromquist, 2017; Meirkulova & Gelişli, 2022). For educational policymakers and leaders, attending to the perceptions that contribute to these opposing negative viewpoints is vital in helping to bring about the necessary changes needed to elevate the profession.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in Eliot Freidson's (1999) theory of professionalism, which emphasizes autonomy, specialized knowledge, and self-regulating authority as defining characteristics of a true profession. In contrast to fields such as medicine or law, teaching has struggled to attain full professional status due to external controls, including governmental mandates and standardized curricula (Hoyle, 2001). Freidson's framework provides a lens through which to evaluate how structural and perceptual reforms could reposition teaching as a profession on par with others. Scholars like Labaree (1992) and Berg (2022) argue that elevating professional status requires systemic reform, including stronger policy advocacy and improved compensation.

Research Questions and Relevant Literature

The following research questions guide this study:

1. What policies and professional development initiatives do educational leaders implement to strengthen the professional identity and status of teachers?

2. How do educational leaders influence societal perceptions and public narratives to elevate the prestige of the teaching profession?

Prior literature illustrates a significant relationship between how teachers are perceived and the challenges of recruitment and retention (Lankford et al., 2014; Price & Weatherby, 2018). Comparative international studies indicate that in countries where teaching is highly respected—such as Finland and Singapore—educational outcomes are generally higher, partly because the profession attracts top-tier candidates (Smak &

Walczak, 2017). Conversely, negative portrayals and a lack of systemic support in countries such as Turkey and the U.S. have contributed to teacher shortages and declining student performance (Meirkulova & Gelişli, 2022; Klimek, 2019).

Additionally, scholars like Labaree (1992) and Hoyle (2001) argue that low teacher status is tied to limited autonomy, poor compensation, and a lack of professional self-governance—challenges which educational leaders are uniquely positioned to confront. Freidson's theory of professionalism underscores that these structural reforms are essential to achieving full occupational status for teaching.

Methods, Techniques, or Modes of Inquiry

The study employs a convergent mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Data will be collected using two tools: a researcher-developed survey (including Likert-scale and open-ended items) and a focus group. The survey aims to gather a broad set of stakeholder perceptions, those of teachers, administrators, parents, and community members, on the current status of the teaching profession. The focus group will comprise educational leaders who will discuss their perceived influence on teacher esteem and professional standing. To ensure validity and reliability, triangulation will be used to cross-verify data patterns, member checking will confirm the accuracy of qualitative interpretations, and an audit trail will document procedural transparency (Creswell, 2009).

Data Sources, Evidence, Objects, or Materials

The primary data sources will include:

- Responses from a sample of K–12 educators, administrators, and community stakeholders from one southern U.S. state.

- Transcripts and notes from a focus group with district and school-level leaders.

- Researcher memos and audit trail documentation.

All data collection tools will be pilot tested for clarity and alignment with research goals.

Preliminary or Anticipated Findings

It is anticipated that the findings will show a disconnect between the public's perception of teaching and the professional identity that educators wish to embody. Early

indications suggest that school leaders who advocate for teacher professionalism—through supportive policy, public messaging, and leadership modeling—are more likely to foster a positive perception of the teaching field. These efforts are expected to translate into increased morale, retention, and public trust. Additionally, systemic barriers such as low pay, political interference, and alternative certification routes may be identified as impediments to achieving full professional status.

Scholarly Significance or Anticipated Contribution to the Field

This research contributes to the growing discourse on teacher professionalism by focusing on the role of educational leadership in enhancing the profession's status. By applying Freidson's (1999) framework to K–12 education, the study offers both theoretical and practical insights into how leaders can reclaim teaching as a respected, high-status profession. It also fills a gap in the literature by providing empirical data on stakeholder perceptions and possible tangible actions that can reshape those perceptions. This work is especially timely, considering the widespread teacher shortages and public debates about the societal role of education.

Anticipated Progress or Next Steps Prior to the Annual Meeting

Before the MSERA Annual Meeting, the following steps will be completed:

- Completion of survey distribution and collection.

- Focus group facilitation and transcription.

- Initial thematic analysis of qualitative data and statistical summary of survey responses.

- Drafting of a preliminary report summarizing findings, limitations, and recommendations for educational leaders.

These steps will prepare the research for presentation and feedback at the conference, with the ultimate goal of developing a leadership-centered action framework for professionalizing the teaching field.

61 Examining the Influence of Principals' Authentic Leadership and Teachers' Psychological Capital on Teachers' Burnout Syndrome and Turnover Intentions in Catalan Schools

Mr. Eduardo Torrecillas Sanchez[1], Dr. Ibrahim Duyar[2]

[1]Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, Arkansas, USA. [2]Arkansas State University, Jonesboro, Jonesboro, USA

Abstract

Examining the Influence of Principals' Authentic Leadership and Teachers' Psychological Capital on Teachers' Burnout Syndrome and Turnover Intentions in Catalan Schools

Purpose of the Study

The problem addressed in this study was teachers' burnout syndrome and turnover intentions in secondary schools within the Spanish region of Catalonia. Teachers' burnout syndrome became notorious in Catalonia in the early 2000s (Longas Mayayo et al., 2012). Sánchez-Pujalte et al. (2021) discovered a possible increase in the appearance of teacher burnout during the pandemic, and Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis supporting the previous findings of Sánchez-Pujalte et al. (2021). A large proportion of secondary Spanish high school teachers demonstrated high levels of burnout, with 28.1% suffering from severe emotional exhaustion, 37.9% exhibiting high levels of depersonalization, and 40.3% experiencing low levels of personal accomplishment (García-Carmona et al., 2019).

García-Garnica (2014) pointed out that Spain also faces noticeable challenges in their schools due to unprofessional principals. The lack of competent principals diminishes the effectiveness of their pedagogical leadership, adding stress to their teams (Moral-Santaella & Raso-Sánchez, 2023). Principals' main activities are based on bureaucratic and administrative tasks rather than being active agents who provide vision (Viñao, 2016). Additionally, teachers' psychological resources are crucial in mitigating burnout

syndrome. Freire et al. (2020) discovered that lower psychological capital levels increase the chances of developing burnout. Soykan et al. (2019) found that higher levels of teachers' psychological capital were negatively associated with stress and positively associated with teachers' well-being, thereby reducing the likelihood of burnout among educators.

The purpose of the current study was to examine whether principals' authentic leadership practices and teachers' psychological capital may have any influence on teacher burnout syndrome and turnover intentions in Catalan secondary schools.

Theoretical Foundations

Maslach's Theory of Burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) served as one of the guiding frameworks for this study. This theory conceptualizes burnout as a chronic exposure to work-related stress, encompassing three main dimensions: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1998). Teachers face a heightened risk of experiencing burnout syndrome compared to other highly stressful professions (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2023).

The Psychological Capital Theory (Zhang et al., 2019) was also adopted as a guiding theory. The psychological capital theory emerged as an internal resource to deal with workplace stressors. It has been proposed as an intervention to mitigate burnout syndrome and turnover intentions. Teachers with higher levels of psychological capital had greater control over their work, which decreased the likelihood of developing burnout and turnover intentions (Ferradás et al., 2019; Xue et al., 2023). Makhdoom et al. (2022) and Sun et al. (2022) also supported the theory that higher levels of psychological capital diminish the appearance of teachers' burnout syndrome. Authenticity refers to the alignment of behavior with an individual's attitudes, beliefs, values, motives, and inherent dispositions (Jongman-Sereno & Leary, 2019).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: Do principals' authentic leadership and dimensions of burnout differ by teachers' gender in secondary Catalan high schools?

RQ2: Using aggregate measures of each variable, do principals' authentic leadership and teachers' psychological capital statistically significantly influence teachers' burnout syndrome in secondary Catalan high schools?

Methods

The current study employed a causal-comparative research design. Causal-comparative allows for comparative relationships between the study variable without manipulating the independent variables (Mertens, 2023). The target population was secondary high school teachers employed full-time in public, subsidized, and private high schools in the Spanish region of Catalonia. A purposeful sampling procedure was employed. The sample size was 211 teachers after eliminating missing cases and outliers.

The data-gathering instrument was an online questionnaire administered to participants via email through Qualtrics. The online questionnaire was composed of three different sections: (a) the participants' demographics, (b) the school's demographics, and (c) the scales used during this investigation. , such as the (a) Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ-5), (b) the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), (c) the Turnover Intention Three Item Scale (TITIS), and (c) Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey (MBI-ES). Descriptive and multivariate analyses were conducted.

Preliminary Findings

Independent sample t-tests were performed for the first two research questions to compare the mean scores of authentic leadership, psychological capital, and burnout dimensions among (a) males and females and (b) experienced teachers and seasoned

teachers. The results showed no statistically significant differences in perceived principals' authentic leadership between male and female teachers, $t(177) = .0099$, $p = .9921$. However, the perceived principals' authentic leadership differed between novice teachers and experienced teachers, $t(175) = 2.21$, $p = .0286$.

Structural equation modelling explored the full structural model for the second research question. As shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, the results revealed that both principals' authentic leadership and teachers' psychological capital statistically significantly influenced teachers' burnout syndrome. Unexpectedly, principals' authentic leadership was positively associated with teachers' burnout syndrome. On the other hand, teachers' psychological capital was negatively associated with teachers' burnout syndrome. The model also identified a significant moderation effect between principals' authentic leadership, teachers' psychological capital, and teachers' burnout syndrome and turnover intentions. These findings suggest that the protective effect of psychological capital on burnout is strengthened in the presence of higher authentic leadership.

Beyond analyzing the full structural model, each path was also explored to provide a better understanding of the relationships between the variables under investigation. The results revealed that higher levels of hope among teachers were associated with reduced emotional exhaustion and lower feelings of diminished personal accomplishment. Optimism emerged as a significant negative predictor across all three burnout dimensions. Aggregate levels of burnout syndrome significantly predicted teachers' turnover intentions, and emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment emerged as the strongest predictors of turnover intentions.

Scholarly Significance

The study's findings highlighted the dynamics between the variables. These results may inform policymakers and practicing educational leaders in formulating policies and strategies to enhance the social capital of teachers, thereby reducing burnout and turnover intentions.

Anticipated Progress Prior to the Annual Meeting

The study is planned to be completed by the 2025 MSERA Annual Meeting.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Teacher Education, Student Motivation

14:00 - 14:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Dustin Whitlock

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125 Not so smooth pathways to placement: A preliminary study of 6th grade assessment outcomes across school types in Guyana.

Dr. Les Archer

Western Kentucky Univ, Bowling Green, KY, USA

Abstract

Purpose

This study investigates how end-of-year 6th grade assessment outcomes influence high school placement across private, religious-affiliated, and public schools. It specifically examines the moderating role of teacher training—measured by the number of educators formally trained—within districts.

Theoretical Framework

Grounded in educational equity theory and decision-making frameworks in tracking and placement, this study explores how human capital influences student opportunity. The research draws on literature emphasizing the gatekeeping role of teachers in academic placement and the potential for professional development to mediate systemic bias.

Methodology:

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental design using publicly available educational datasets to examine 6th grade assessment scores and high school placement outcomes. The data were sourced from state repositories that include disaggregated student achievement results (e.g., standardized test scores) and publicly reported data with respect to number of trained teachers in each school district. The design also incorporated moderation analysis to assess the influence of district-level variables—specifically, the proportion of trained teachers.

The sample (*n* = 122) comprises 6th grade students across eleven school districts. Quantitative data included standardized end of year scores and high school placement outcomes. Moderation analysis was conducted to determine whether teacher training influenced the relationship between test scores and placement.

Results

Preliminary results suggest that students in private and religious schools had the highest overall placement into advanced or honors tracks. In districts with a higher proportion of trained teachers, additional data may be needed since it become difficult to identify their placement in each school sector. However, there is a greater likelihood that they are placed in public schools.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Findings highlight the importance of investing in targeted teacher training to improve the fairness and accuracy of placement decisions. School leaders and district policymakers should consider expanding professional development focused on assessment interpretation and student placement equity. Increased teacher capacity in these areas can act as a structural lever for more equitable academic outcomes during critical educational transitions.

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178 Investigating College Students' Post-Pandemic Resilience, Self-Efficacy, and Self-Regulation

Dr. Yan Dai[1], Dr. Jill Salisbury-Glennon[2], Dr. Chih-hsuan Wang[2]

[1]Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, USA. [2]Auburn University, Auburn, AL, USA

Abstract

Review of the Literature

The COVID-19 global pandemic affected 90% of the world's learners (Sharma & Alvi, 2021). Research during the post-COVID era has found that many college students faced mental health issues (Moore & Conway, 2024) and isolation, as well as a decrease in communication skills (Collar, 2023). Further research has found that these post-pandemic challenges can be mitigated by resilience (Wattick et al., 2021), and that self-efficacy can have a significant effect on resilience (Guo et al., 2022). Further, Ulya et al. (2024) suggested that enhancing college students' self-regulated learning and self-efficacy could help college students to address these post-pandemic challenges. Thus, the present exploratory study sought to investigate the effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic on college students' self-efficacy, self-regulation, and resilience.

Methods

Participants and Procedure

A total of 263 college students were recruited using convenience sampling from a large Southeastern university in the United States. Of these, 145 responses in 2020 and 95 in 2023 were deemed usable, reflecting usable rates of 90.1% and 93.1%, respectively. Demographic variables are reported in Table 1.

Instruments

The online Qualtrics survey packet included a brief demographic questionnaire, the Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance and the Metacognitive Self-Regulation subscales from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ; Pintrich et al., 1991), and the Resilience Scale developed by Van der Meer et al. (RES; 2018). Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the Self-Efficacy, Self-Regulation, and Resilience scales were 0.91, 0.97, and 0.86 in 2020; and 0.92, 0.79, and 0.90 in 2023, respectively, demonstrating acceptable to strong internal reliability.

Results

Data were analyzed using SPSS 28. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine differences in students' self-efficacy (SE), self-regulation (SR), and resilience (RES) between the COVID-19 pandemic period (2020) and the post-pandemic period (2023). Levene's tests for equality of variances indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met for all three variables (all *p*s > .05). The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in self-efficacy between students surveyed during the pandemic (M = 5.63, SD = 1.00) and those surveyed post-pandemic (M = 5.47, SD = 1.13), $t(242) = 1.16$, $p = .124$ (one-tailed), $d = 0.15$. Similarly, no significant difference in self-regulation was found between the pandemic (M = 4.68, SD = 0.92) and post-pandemic groups (M = 4.77, SD = 0.90), $t(242) = -0.81$, $p = .210$ (one-tailed), $d = -0.11$. However, a significant difference emerged in resilience. Students in the post-pandemic period (M = 4.02, SD = 0.66) reported higher resilience than those during the pandemic (M = 3.86, SD = 0.64), $t(241) = -1.87$, $p = .031$ (one-tailed), Cohen's $d = -0.25$, suggesting a small effect size (see Table 2).

These findings indicate that while differences in self-efficacy and self-regulation between the COVID pandemic and the post-pandemic were not significant, there was a trend toward greater resilience post-pandemic. The results of this study lend support to prior research (e.g., Ang et al., 2021) suggesting that college students were able to develop a sense of resilience post-pandemic.

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42 Bridging Theory and Practice: Using Disaggregated Assessment Data to Advance Equity in Teacher Preparation

Dr. Tina Allen, Dr. Dustin Whitlock, Dr. Joanne Hood

Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, LA, USA

Abstract

Despite high overall candidate performance in educator preparation programs (EPPs), persistent disparities in assessment outcomes by gender and race raise important equity concerns. This presentation shares how one EPP used disaggregated data from key assessments to examine and address such disparities, advancing equity-focused continuous improvement. Grounded in an equity-minded lens and guided by continuous improvement theory, this study explores how disaggregation informed both understanding and action.

The study draws from the EPP's CAEP self-study and focuses on three signature assessments aligned to InTASC Standards 1–3 and CAEP Standard R1.1: the Lesson Plan, the Teacher Work Sample (TWS), and the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FFT). Data were collected from all candidates completing these assessments over a three-year period and disaggregated by gender, race/ethnicity, and program area. Descriptive and comparative analyses were used to identify and interpret performance patterns.

Findings revealed that white and male candidates outperformed peers in planning and instructional domains across multiple instruments. These results prompted faculty to move beyond reporting gaps toward improving structures for all candidates. In response, the EPP front-loaded unit planning instruction, enhanced formative assessment emphasis, and bridged gaps between practicum and methods coursework. Structured faculty protocols supported collaborative data interpretation and the design of inclusive improvements.

This session shares both findings and the replicable process used to analyze and act on disaggregated data. Attendees will gain a practical framework for embedding equity-focused inquiry into assessment and improvement cycles. The session contributes to cultivating a community of lifelong researchers committed to equity, reflection, and instructional quality.

Symposium - T.A.L.K. Math: Transforming Achievement through Listening and Knowledge (The Power of Discourse in Elementary Mathematics)

14:00 - 14:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Austin Ferrell

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102 T.A.L.K. Math: Transforming Achievement through Listening and Knowledge (The Power of Discourse in Elementary Mathematics)

Dr. Austin Ferrell

University of Tennessee at Martin, Martin, TN, USA

Abstract

What happens when students begin to talk more than the teacher during math class? *Magic.*

This session explores how math discourse, commonly known as number talks, can transform elementary classrooms into spaces where students feel confident, curious, and connected through meaningful mathematical conversations.

TALK Math (Transforming Achievement through Listening and Knowledge) is a practical framework that centers student voice, promotes critical thinking, and fosters a culture of collaborative learning. Participants will be introduced to each component of the TALK model and learn how it can be seamlessly integrated into the daily math block.

The session includes opportunities to experience a number talk in action, analyze student responses, and explore effective questioning strategies that shift the cognitive load to students. Attendees will engage in hands-on activities, practice using talk moves that support equity, and collaborate on planning a number talk they can implement immediately.

By the end of the session, participants will gain a clear understanding of the TALK framework, acquire tools and sentence stems to support productive classroom discourse, and leave with a ready-to-use number talk plan.

Whether new to number talks or looking to deepen their implementation, educators will walk away equipped to create math classrooms where student thinking drives instruction and discourse becomes the foundation for deeper understanding.

Let’s help students do more than solve problems. Let’s help them TALK Math.

Training - Making Research Visible: Infographics for Researchers (and Administrators!)

14:00 - 14:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Presentation type Training
Michael Mills

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182 Making Research Visible: Infographics for Researchers (and Administrators!)

Dr. Michael Mills

University of Central Arkansas, Little Rock, AR, USA

Abstract

Educational administrators and researchers produce valuable data and findings, but how often does this information actually reach and influence the people who need it most? This training session explores why infographics have become essential tools for research communication and administration, examining their strategic purposes and the principles that make them effective for diverse audiences.

The session begins by addressing the fundamental question: why use infographics? We'll explore how visual communication serves different purposes—from quickly conveying key findings to busy administrators, to making complex research accessible to community stakeholders, to creating memorable takeaways from program evaluations. Participants will examine the cognitive science behind visual processing and understand when infographics are most effective compared to traditional reports or presentations.

A major focus will be on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles and accessibility considerations in infographic design. We'll discuss how to create visuals that work for users with different learning preferences, visual abilities, and cultural

backgrounds. This includes understanding color accessibility, font choices, layout principles, and alternative text considerations. Participants will learn to design infographics that are not just visually appealing but genuinely inclusive and accessible to all users.

The session will tackle an important ethical consideration: how do we balance respect for our audience's expertise with the reality of their time constraints? We'll explore the tension between providing comprehensive information and creating engaging, digestible content. How do we honor the intellectual capacity of educated professionals while acknowledging that they may have only minutes to absorb key information? This discussion will address concerns about "dumbing down" research while recognizing that increased engagement often requires strategic simplification.

Working in small groups, participants will evaluate existing infographics using a structured framework that examines purpose, audience alignment, accessibility features, and effectiveness. What makes one infographic more compelling than another? How do design choices support or undermine the intended message? Participants will identify both successful elements and problematic features in various infographics, developing critical evaluation skills.

The session will also address common mistakes in educational infographics, including misleading visualizations, poor accessibility, and misalignment between design and purpose. Participants will learn to identify when infographics are being used inappropriately and when traditional formats might be more suitable.

By the end of the session, participants will have developed a framework for evaluating and planning infographics in their own work. They'll understand the strategic purposes these tools serve, the principles that make them accessible and effective, and how to navigate the ethical considerations around presenting complex information visually. Most importantly, they'll be able to make informed decisions about when and how to use infographics to improve communication and engagement with their research and administrative work.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Higher Education

15:00 - 15:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Randy Parker

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81 Unpacking the Use and Value of Part-Time Faculty on the Value-Added College Experience

Dr. David Tolliver[1], Dr. Michael Miller[2]

[1]East Texas A&M University, Commerce, TX, USA. [2]University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

Since the 1970's, part-time faculty have increasingly become important resources for colleges and universities. As funding for colleges and universities has become progressively critical, the employment of part-time faculty has shown to reduce the costs of courses offered by these institutions. While part-time faculty are compensated less than full-time faculty, part-time faculty teach 50% of college courses and 60% of courses offered by community colleges. Part-time faculty, whose professional titles vary, have shown to use their expertise to provide students with out-of-classroom experiences, increasing student engagement. Various research studies have shown the advantages and disadvantages of hiring part-time faculty; however, few empirical studies have found positive relationships between student performance and faculty employment status. The purpose for conducting the current study was to identify the correlations of part-time faculty use by a post secondary institution and student success. Data collected for the current study were identified from the Association of Public Land Grant Universities (APLU), Carnegie Foundation, and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), as well as the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard. The four hypotheses the study addressed included HO1: The higher the percentage of part-time faculty, the lower the first-to-second year retention rate; HO2: The higher the percentage of part-time faculty, the lower the graduation rate; HO3: The higher the percentage of part-time faculty, the lower the cost of attendance; HO4: The higher the percentage of part-time faculty, the higher the average earnings post graduation. Results from the study are discussed. Additionally, the use, function, and advantages and disadvantages of employing part-time faculty were discussed.

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127 Faculty Perceptions of Formative Assessments

Dr. Lee Babin

Northwestern State University, Natchitoches, La, USA

Abstract

This dissertation explored faculty perceptions of formative assessment in higher education, with a specific focus on how these assessments influence course design and instructional decision-making. The central research question guiding this study was: *What perceptions do faculty have regarding formative assessments in higher education and future course design?* The study aimed to understand the perceived benefits, challenges, and institutional supports or barriers associated with the implementation of formative assessments. To address this question, the study was conducted at a large

urban community college in North Carolina. Findings indicate that faculty recognize the value of formative assessments for enhancing student engagement, providing timely feedback, and supporting self-regulated learning. However, several barriers were identified, including time constraints, student participation, and lack of formal training. Faculty expressed a desire for more professional development, institutional policies that recognize formative assessments as tools for evaluation, and discipline-specific approaches that address unique challenges faced in academia. The study concluded that for formative assessments to be fully embedded, institutions must invest in sustained faculty development programs, policy reform, and administrative support structures. These measures can promote a culture of assessment that prioritizes learning, feedback, and instructional responsiveness. Recommendations for future research include longitudinal studies, multi-institutional comparisons, and the inclusion of student perspectives to further enrich the understanding of formative assessment practices in postsecondary education.

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251 Beyond the Goodbye: Transforming Exit Survey Data into Actionable Insights

Dr. Franz Reneau

Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, GA, USA

Abstract

Post-secondary institutions increasingly collect extensive amounts of data from and about students to enhance the overall student experience. However, despite the goal of continuous improvement, many institutions struggle to extract meaningful, scalable insights from data gathered at the point of student completion. This presentation explores one institution's transformative journey in reimagining its methodological approach to graduating student exit surveys, shifting from passive data collection to active insight generation. The study highlights how leveraging technology, cultivating a data-informed campus culture, and strategically engaging stakeholders led to more impactful use of graduating students' exit survey data. Key findings demonstrate how these efforts informed institutional effectiveness initiatives and fostered a more responsive, student-centered environment. Findings show the potential of exit survey data to drive impactful change and offer valuable lessons for advancing institutional effectiveness within the post-secondary context.

Position Paper - From Budgeting to Buy-In: Aligning Finance with Instructional Impact

15:00 - 15:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Presentation type Position Paper
Rod Uzat

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195 From Budgeting to Buy-In: Aligning Finance with Instructional Impact

Mr. Michael Miller[1], Dr. Rod Uzat[2]

[1]Steilacoom Historical School District, Anderson Island, Washington, USA. [2]UTPB, Odessa, Texas, USA

Abstract

School finance is often misunderstood or dismissed by site-level staff as an isolated, compliance-driven function managed by central office administrators. For their part, school and district leaders are often "unprepared to engage on…issues [of] equity, spending trade-offs, and the link between money and school outcomes" (Roza, 2018, p. 11). Today's funding challenges in education demand that educational leaders regularly facilitate dialogue to identify opportunities for strategic resource use, shared ownership, and ultimately, improved student achievement.

Using a case study of how one district in Washington state leveraged data trends from an online reading program to make impactful decisions about curriculum adoption, this paper seeks to bridge the gap between fiscal planning and instructional practice by reframing finance not as "one more thing to do," but as a lever for learning.

The case study will highlight how i-Ready data trends led to the adoption of the University of Florida Literacy Institute (UFLI) curriculum, and how through transparent collaboration across leadership teams, the budgeting process was redefined not as "buying a new program," but as a targeted, data-informed investment in closing achievement gaps. The result was increased buy-in, cross-site alignment, deeper instructional coherence, and measurable gains in student learning—specifically in the area of early literacy.

Drawing from both district and building-level leadership experience, the paper will explore how aligning financial decisions with instructional priorities can lead to stronger implementation, greater equity, and improved student outcomes along with examples of how visual tools and storytelling through data can deepen system-wide understanding. The study will also challenge the "my school" or "your school" budget mindset that often keeps school finance siloed at the site level by offering an alternative philosophy that nurtures a more unifying approach through collaboration and collective impact. The

paper will close with practical strategies for embedding finance conversations into school improvement planning, PLCs, and leadership meetings.

By reconnecting school finance with instructional leadership, this study offers a methodology for how districts can foster a culture where every dollar spent moves the needle for kids—and where every educator, regardless of position, sees their role in that mission.

Roza, M. (2018). Equipping school leaders to spend wisely. National Association of State Board of

Education, 11±13.
https://edunomicslab.org/wpcontent/uploads/2019/02/Roza_September-2018-Standard.pdf

Symposium - Optimizing High-Quality Instructional Materials: PK-12 Systemic Support from Three Arkansas Universities and the Arkansas DOE

15:00 - 15:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Roger Guevara

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138 Optimizing High-Quality Instructional Materials: PK-12 Systemic Support from Three Arkansas Universities and the Arkansas Department of Education

Dr. Dr. Roger Guevara[1], Dr. Gail Hughes[2], Ms. Capri Salaam[3], Dr. Holley Cothren[4], Ms. LaQuita Jones[4]

[1]Southern Arkansas University, Magnolia, AR, USA. [2]Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, AR, USA. [3]Arkansas Department of Education, Division of Elementary and Secondary Education, Little Rock, AR, USA. [4]Henderson State University, Arkadelphia, AR, USA

Abstract

In this symposium, the panel will explore the growing role of High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) in improving educational outcomes across Arkansas, particularly in the preparation of new teachers and school leaders through educator preparation programs (EPPs). Drawing from current initiatives led by Arkansas ERZ Partnership

Teams, this session will unpack the process, successes, and challenges of HQIM implementation across both local education agencies (LEAs) and EPPs.

The session will begin by grounding attendees in a shared understanding of HQIM: standards-aligned, research-based curriculum designed to provide every student—regardless of background—with access to rigorous, engaging content. It will highlight the evidence showing that HQIM contributes to improved student achievement, particularly when paired with strong instructional support. For example, studies reveal that students exposed to grade-level material—despite initial skill gaps—make significant academic gains, and teachers using HQIM experience less planning stress and increased effectiveness. This session will provide a practical approach for school leaders to crosswalk HQIM and Impact Levers (Structure for Learning, Aligned Content, Direct Instruction, Student Practice, and Assessment & Instruction) to enhance the capacity of instructional leadership by incorporating the EPP State Review Standards and the Curriculum Literacy Competency Frameworks for Math and Literacy.

We will also examine HQIM's influence on teacher and leader preparation. By integrating HQIM into field experiences and methods courses, teacher and leadership candidates enter classrooms and schools with real-world readiness and confidence. Participants will learn about how lesson internalization, a key practice supported by HQIM, strengthens lesson planning, anticipates misconceptions, and sharpens delivery. This alignment between preparation and classroom expectations enhances Day 1 readiness and boosts teacher knowledge, understanding, and confidence in curriculum as well as leader retention.

The Arkansas HQIM initiative also underscores the need for robust partnerships between EPPs and LEAs. Sustained collaboration ensures curriculum coherence, consistent training, and a unified approach to supporting educators. However, challenges remain. Participants will engage in a discussion of real-world obstacles faced by EPPs and school districts, such as adapting rigid materials to meet diverse student needs, ensuring equity across districts, and managing professional development capacity. Through presentation and dialogue, attendees will critically evaluate the dual impact of HQIM on K–12 students and teacher and leadership candidates, explore its integration into teacher and leader prep programs, and consider how to support internalization and flexibility in lesson design.

NOTE: I wish to join MSERA immediately upon pending approval.

Training - Teaching Feud: Survey Says...It's All About Engagement!

15:00 - 15:50 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Presentation type Training
Rachel Dunbar

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153 Teaching Feud: Survey Says... It's All About Engagement!

Dr. Rachel Dunbar

University of West Alabama, Livingston, AL, USA

Abstract

Which teacher from your childhood stands out most in your mind? Was it the one who asked you to memorize facts from the board—or the one who brought those facts to life in a way you will never forget? Typically our most memorable teachers are those who present information in a captivating way to grasp our attention. Unfortunately, the emphasis on high stakes testing has created a "culture of confinement" in which teachers feel they have to stick to the script rather than venture into new territory. Veteran teachers remain stuck in their old ways of doing things while novice teachers lack the empathy that typically comes as a result of matriculating through a traditional teacher education program. Those teachers in the middle are often caught in the crosshairs of maintaining tradition versus adapting to innovation.

While reading, writing, and critical thinking remain essential to education, the advancement of technology and its use is on the rise. In several cases, complete reliance on one-to-one technology has prevented many students from grasping and fine tuning their basic skills. Although Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to to make learning stronger in some cases, it threatens to cripple many students who are already struggling. Teschers, Neuhaus, and Vogt (2024) posit that tradition has it pros, yet it can also serve to hinder learning in some instances. They recommend that a more reasonable approach is one where teachers and students collaborate in a dynamic and creative learning exchange.

Research by Cents-Boonstra et al. (2020) supports this, showing that teachers who use motivational strategies see greater student engagement. When students are motivated, they *will* learn. Fortunately, educators do not have to choose between tradition and innovation. A dynamic integration of both can lead to fresh, effective instruction. This is especially critical as the number of culturally diverse and neurodivergent learners continues to grow—demanding creative, inclusive teaching that reaches all students.

This 90-minute interactive session will provide educators with practical, high-energy strategies to boost classroom engagement and academic success. Participants will collaborate in fast-paced game challenges that model how to merge traditional practices with innovative tools and methods. Each activity is designed to be adaptable across content areas and grade levels.

By the end of the session, participants will walk away with a ready-to-use engagement toolkit that they can implement immediately. It is suitable for K–12 teachers looking to reignite their instructional spark and university instructors preparing pre-service educators to enter the classroom.

MSERA Business Meeting and AWARDS

16:00 - 18:00 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Presentation type General Session

Business Meeting, Elections, and MSERA/MSERF Award Presentations.

All Registered Conference Attendees are Invited to Attend

MSERA President's Reception

18:00 - 20:00 Thursday, 6th November, 2025
7th Floor E-LOUNGE

All Registered Conference Attendees are Invited to Attend.

Breakfast for MSERA Past Presidents

07:00 - 08:45 Friday, 7th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES

Attendance by MSERA Past Presidents and Invited Guests Only

Registration

08:00 - 11:00 Friday, 7th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOYER

Pick Up Registration Packet and Conference Materials

Training - Click, Lead, Learn: Unlocking Student Engagement Online

09:00 - 09:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Presentation type Training
Lisette Manuel

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242 Click, Lead, Learn: Unlocking Student Engagement Online

Dr. Lisette Manuel

Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA, USA

Abstract

In virtual classroom settings (K-12 and higher education), authentic student engagement, empowerment, and ownership of learning are not just possible—they are essential. This training session, *Click, Lead, Learn: Unlocking Student Engagement*

Online, will equip educators with research-informed, equity-driven strategies to create virtual classroom experiences where students lead, inquire, and grow as learners.

This session positions both educators and students as co-investigators in the learning process. The session emphasizes student agency as a foundation for deeper inquiry and centers the idea that when students have voice and choice, they are more likely to think critically, engage meaningfully, and pursue knowledge that matters to them and their communities.

Participants will explore how to shift from teacher-led instruction to student-led learning in virtual environments by designing lesson structures that prioritize voice, reflection, questioning, and self-directed exploration. Drawing from current research on engagement, virtual learning, and culturally responsive teaching, the training will highlight practical methods for:

- Designing interactive, student-centered virtual lessons
- Embedding student choice and inquiry into standards-based instruction
- Creating structures for peer-led discussions, virtual collaboration, and project-based learning
- Utilizing data from student reflections, formative assessments, and digital engagement tools to adjust instruction in real time
- Fostering a classroom culture where students feel safe, seen, and supported to lead

Educators will investigate how their current practices either support or limit student empowerment. The training will encourage teachers to become practitioner-researchers—regularly collecting classroom-based data, reflecting on their pedagogy, and iterating on lesson design to maximize engagement and equity.

Importantly, the training will also examine student empowerment through an intersectional lens. Participants will consider how race, language, disability, and socioeconomic status shape a student's access to voice and leadership opportunities in virtual spaces. We will explore how thoughtful lesson design and intentional facilitation can interrupt patterns of disengagement and marginalization by amplifying student agency.

By the end of the session, participants will leave with research-based tools and strategies to immediately implement in their virtual classrooms. In doing so, they will also join the larger movement of cultivating a community of lifelong researchers—one in which teachers continually examine their own practices, empower students as co-creators of knowledge, and advance educational equity through daily instruction.

This training serves not only as a professional learning opportunity but as an invitation to rethink what's possible in K-12 and higher education virtual learning. It challenges educators to become reflective leaders of transformation and to model a research-minded stance for the next generation of empowered learners.

Training - Design for Connection: Enhancing Collaboration, Communication, and Community in Online Teaching

09:00 - 09:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Presentation type Training
Keicia Hawkins

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219 Design for Connection: Enhancing Collaboration, Communication, and Community in Online Teaching

Dr. Angela Mulkana

Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, MS, USA

Abstract

Fostering a strong sense of community and collaboration is essential for student learning and success in an online learning environment. Without the face-to-face interaction, students rely on both instructor and peer support to stay engaged, motivated, and confident in their learning. To address this, online educators must prioritize consistent communication and intentional relationship-building activities.

Creating a welcoming and supportive classroom begins with personalized welcome emails, regular check-ins, and timely, constructive feedback (Major, 2022). These touchpoints help clarify expectations, build trust, and encourage students to seek help when needed. Equally important is promoting meaningful peer interaction through discussion forums, collaborative activities, and structured feedback opportunities.

In this session, I will share practical strategies for designing a connected and collaborative learning environment where students feel supported, challenged, and empowered. Participants will explore evidence-based practices that foster student-instructor relationships, encourage peer engagement, and promote effective group collaboration.

Key strategies include the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), structured peer feedback tools, low-stakes collaborative assignments, consistent communication practices, and intentional course design elements such as orientation modules, FAQs, and “Getting to Know You” discussions.

Drawing on student feedback, survey data, and classroom experiences, this session will demonstrate how these approaches have led to increased student engagement, improved comfort with course materials, and higher overall satisfaction.

By the end of this session, participants will gain practical strategies for strengthening communication, collaboration, course navigation, community-building, and reflective teaching in online learning environments. These approaches are designed to promote student engagement, deepen learning, and support overall success. To demonstrate effectiveness, student artifacts and feedback will also be shared.

Communication

- Welcome Messages: Craft welcome emails and announcements to set a positive tone and build early rapport.
- Instructor Feedback: Use personalized video and screen capture tools to provide meaningful, individualized feedback on assignments and assessments. This is a positive tool for guiding student progress and allowed for the provision of actionable insights and encouragement.
- Follow-Up Emails: Emails to check in with students, focusing on topics such as their progress in the course, their experience with assignments, and their overall well-being. Gather feedback to improve course experience.

Collaboration

- Peer Interaction Tools: Incorporate collaborative strategies such as the Jigsaw method and structured peer feedback using checklists.
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs): Design small group activities that foster deeper content engagement and diverse perspectives.
- Assignments: Break larger projects, like lesson plans, into manageable components, allowing for incremental feedback and collaborative learning.

Course Navigation

- Orientation and Overview Materials: Create an introduction video, welcome module, and FAQ page to help students navigate the course with ease.
- Organized Homepage: Provide clear navigation links and resources to promote student independence and confidence.

Community Building

- Fostering Belonging: Build rapport and a sense of community through interactive tools such as a “Get-to-Know-You” handout and an “About Your Instructor” document.

Reflection on Teaching

- Student Surveys: Use mid-semester and end-of-semester surveys to collect insights into student experiences. Apply this feedback to refine course design, assessments, and collaborative structures like PLCs.

Distinguished Dissertation Award Presentation

09:00 - 09:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
Kelly Byrd

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225 The Long Shadow of Parenting: A Structural Equation Approach to Engagement in College

Dr. Yan Dai

Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, AL, USA

Abstract

This empirical study investigates the relationships among caregiving styles, self-efficacy, academic entitlement, and engagement among college students. Grounded in Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, it seeks to elucidate how these factors interplay to provide insights for educators, researchers, and policymakers to improve student academic engagement.

Although academic engagement is a well-established predictor of learning achievement, there has been a paucity of research exploring the holistic impact of these factors in higher education. Most existing studies often focus on isolated variables or on children and adolescent populations, leaving the mediating effects underexplored in the college student population.

A hypothesized structural model was tested using survey data from 1,199 college students. Participants completed an online Qualtrics survey including a demographic questionnaire and five instruments: the Parenting Style and Dimensions Questionnaire, the Self-Efficacy for Learning and Performance subscale from the MSLQ, the Academic Entitlement Questionnaire, and the Student Engagement Scale. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed using *M*plus 8.

Results revealed that the authoritative caregiving style positively predicted academic engagement, while the authoritarian style had a negative effect. Permissive caregiving had no significant direct impact on engagement but lowered self-efficacy. Self-efficacy positively predicted engagement and negatively predicted academic entitlement. All caregiving styles positively predicted entitlement, which in turn negatively influenced engagement. Self-efficacy mediated the relationship between permissive caregiving and engagement. Entitlement mediated the effects of all caregiving styles.

Findings highlight the importance of caregiving in shaping college students' motivational and behavioral profiles. Pedagogical implications include promoting autonomy-supportive environments, addressing self-efficacy, and reducing academic entitlement.

Symposium - American Education as the New Frontier

09:00 - 09:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Rod Uzat

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192 American Education as the New Frontier

Dr. Rod Uzat[1], Mr. Eloy Garza[2], Mr. John Turcic[3], Dr. Michael Webb[4], Mr. Efrain Garza[5], Dr. Jason Ravitz[6]

[1]UTPB, Odessa, Texas, USA. [2]Career Bridge, Pharr, Texas, USA. [3]TLI Initiatives, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. [4]Tomball ISD, Tomball, Texas, USA. [5]South Texas ISD, Mercedes, Texas, USA. [6]Evaluation By Design LLC, Richmond, California, USA

Abstract

"There is no such thing as American history – only a frontier." When Don Draper delivered that line in the series Mad Men, he was an advertising executive searching for a message to save a small airline that had just suffered a plane crash. After struggling for how best to address the tragedy, Draper channeled the "go forward" spirit of John F. Kennedy's "New Frontier".

Indeed, meeting a hard challenge was Kennedy's solution to national complacency. He set America's focus on reaching the moon and then held it as a torch lit by the same fire of purpose that burned in the first explorers and the early pioneers of the West. Kennedy saw frontier challenges as the lifeblood of being American. Today, that New Frontier is education and how emerging practices and technologies can be leveraged to serve America's needs.

This symposium will address, "What will delivery of American educational programming look like 20 years from now?" To advance this discussion, the symposium will include a pedagogy rooted in lifelong learning, problem-solving collaboration, and the integration of technology for quick analysis.

The framework for the symposium will be based on the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP), a Jesuit learning methodology which aims to promote individual

developmental gains through the cyclical deliberation of context, experience, reflection, action and evaluation. Panel participants will include:

- Dr. Michael Webb - CAO, Tomball ISD
- Mr. Eloy Garza – Career Bridge CEO
- Mr. John Turcic - Transformative Learning Initiatives Founder and Principal
- Mr. Efrain Garza - Deputy Superintendent, South Texas ISD
- Dr. Jason Ravitz - President, Evaluation by Design
- Dr. Rod Uzat - Educator Preparation Program Coordinator, UTPB (Symposium Facilitator)

The relevant “experience” of the panelists will include:

- UTPB Superintendent candidate program "flipped" delivery pilot
- Tomball Innovation Center
- Experiential Learning Management Systems
- Work of TLI in business-education partnerships
- Magnet High Schools and Virtual High School at South Texas ISD
- Professional certificates at Google, PBL and 21st century teaching and learning

The discussion will begin by reviewing the following context trends:

- More practical. project-based authentic work
- Growth of internships as part of educational experiences
- Needs-based partnerships between business and education
- More micro credentials vs traditional degrees
- Certification needs being met outside of traditional colleges and universities

Next, "Questions that Need Answering" for reflection will be added:

- What do colleges and universities need to do to compete and stay relevant?
- What are the challenges of education-business partnerships?
- What are the implications for the most critical skills demanded of educators?
- How do we manipulate AI for maximum effect?
- How do we best "do" school in the future?

In the "action" phase (15 minutes), panelists will triangulate between the main question, context topics and the reflection questions to plan the discussion. Once agreement is reached, the discussion will last 60 minutes. In the remaining 15 minutes, an AI summary will be pulled from the transcription. Panelists will assess the summary and identify "value added" insights arising from the discussion. The symposium will close with an evaluation of discussion gaps and a follow up agenda for future consideration.

Training - Rooted in Excellence: Cultivating Inclusive Practices Amid Educational Uncertainty

09:00 - 09:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Presentation type Training
Michael Mills

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159 Rooted in Excellence: Cultivating Inclusive Practices Amid Educational Uncertainty

Dr. Michael Mills, Dr. Donna Wake, Dr. Jessica Herring-Watson

University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA

Abstract

In today's evolving educational landscape, effective educators and researchers must balance evidence-based best practices with the complex realities of contemporary institutional and community expectations. This training session equips P-20 educators and researchers with strategies to maintain excellence in both teaching and scholarly inquiry while serving diverse populations and pursuing meaningful research agendas in challenging times.As educational researchers and practitioners, we face the responsibility of examining complex issues that may challenge the status quo while maintaining our steadfast focus on educating all students and advancing knowledge through rigorous inquiry. This interactive training addresses how educators can continue investigating and implementing both teaching practices and research methodologies that support student success, contribute to scholarly discourse, and align with institutional goals across varied educational contexts.Participants will explore current educational research on inclusive teaching and research methodologies that demonstrate measurable improvements in student engagement, achievement, and scholarly outcomes. The session emphasizes data-driven decision making and reflective inquiry as foundational tools for navigating pressures while upholding professional standards in both classroom and research settings. Through case studies and collaborative problem-solving, attendees will develop strategic communication approaches for discussing research-backed practices with colleagues, administrators, funding agencies, and community stakeholders.The training combines theory with practical application, focusing on sustainable implementation strategies that educators and researchers can confidently adopt within their specific institutional contexts. Special attention is given to documentation and assessment techniques that clearly demonstrate educational and research outcomes while maintaining institutional alignment. Participants will engage in role-playing exercises addressing real-world scenarios they encounter when promoting student-centered approaches and pursuing research agendas that examine equity and inclusion.Attendees will develop actionable plans for creating welcoming learning environments and pursuing research questions

that maximize impact across diverse populations and scholarly communities. The session provides concrete tools including conversation scripts, implementation timelines, assessment rubrics, and resource lists grounded in current educational research. Emphasis is placed on building confidence in articulating the value and outcomes of evidence-based teaching and research approaches.This training directly supports MSERA's commitment to cultivating lifelong researchers who see inquiry as a mindset that fuels innovation, equity, and continuous improvement. By examining educational processes and research questions through multiple approaches while considering policies that impact education for generations to come, participants will strengthen their ability to advance knowledge while serving the public good through both teaching excellence and meaningful scholarship.Educational leaders and researchers at all levels will leave with renewed confidence in their ability to create engaging, supportive learning environments and pursue impactful research agendas that serve diverse populations while maintaining professional security and institutional support.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Career & Tech Education, Culturally Responsive Education, Testing & Accountability

10:00 - 10:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Earlisha Whitfield

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140 Empowering Adult Learners through Integrated Education and Training: A Pathway to Sustainability and Equity

Dr. Anne Bartlett[1,2], Dr. Dylan Solice[2]

[1]Brazosport College, Lake Jackson, TX, USA. [2]Northwestern State University of Louisiana, Natchitoches, LA, USA

Abstract

This session explores the transformative impact of Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs on adult learners, focusing on a nine-week initiative implemented at a Gulf Coast community college. Rooted in Adult Learning and Human Capital Theories, this research investigates how academic and social interventions shape success within IET frameworks. Aligned with the conference theme, "Sustainable Development and Innovation for a Better Tomorrow," this session underscores the pivotal role of IET programs in addressing workforce gaps and advancing equity.

As industries face increasing demands for skilled labor, community colleges have emerged as critical partners in workforce development. IET programs address the dual

challenges of underprepared adult learners and unmet workforce needs by integrating literacy education, workforce preparation, and occupational training. This study examines a cohort-based IET initiative tailored for aspiring electrical technicians. By embedding academic and social support systems within a structured educational framework, the program aims to improve student outcomes and economic mobility.

This study centers on the following questions:

1. What academic interventions within the IET program enhance student success?
2. How do social interventions, such as financial and wellness support, contribute to stakeholder perceptions of program effectiveness?
3. Are there other environmental factors that influence the perceived success of the IET program?

The study employs a qualitative mono-method approach, utilizing focus groups with three distinct stakeholder groups: students, instructors, and program administrators. Data is collected through structured discussions and analyzed using grounded theory to identify recurring themes and patterns. The findings are supported by analytical memos and triangulated across participant groups for validity.

The findings highlight that stakeholders valued different aspects of the program. Despite their varying perspectives, all stakeholder groups agreed that the comprehensive structure of the program was instrumental in ensuring student success. They believed that students would face significant challenges in completing the program and transitioning to the workforce without the program’s integrated academic and social support. These insights demonstrate the multifaceted nature of IET programs and their potential to address systemic inequities through tailored, collaborative approaches.

This proposal aligns with the conference's emphasis on sustainable development by showcasing how education can serve as a vehicle for economic and social equity. By engaging adult learners with innovative, industry-relevant training, the IET model supports the creation of skilled labor forces while addressing systemic barriers to educational and workforce success.

Participants will:

1. Understand the core components and theoretical underpinnings of IET programs.
2. Explore strategies for integrating academic and social supports to enhance student outcomes by drawing on research findings from three stakeholder focus groups.
3. Discuss implications for policy and practice in scaling sustainable educational initiatives.

228 Student Me-Search: The Power of Ethnographical Research Through Student Journaling

Dr. Anthony Thompson

Historical-Connections, Tallahassee, Florida, USA

Abstract

This study explores the power of ethnographical research through student journaling, focusing on the attitudes and experiences of Black students in the classroom. Using a qualitative approach, this research examines the ways in which student journaling can provide a platform for Black students to express their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, and how this can inform teaching practices.

The study involved 30 Black students from diverse backgrounds, who participated in a journaling exercise over a period of 12 weeks. The students were asked to reflect on their experiences in the classroom, including their interactions with teachers and peers, and their perceptions of the curriculum. The journals were analyzed using thematic analysis, and several themes emerged, including the importance of representation, the need for culturally responsive teaching, and the impact of microaggressions on student experiences.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of creating a safe and inclusive learning environment that values the experiences and perspectives of Black students. As hooks (1994) notes, "when teachers create a classroom environment that is inclusive and respectful, students feel valued and empowered" (p. 35). The study also underscores the need for teachers to engage in ongoing reflection and self-critique, in order to recognize and challenge their own biases and assumptions (Howard, 2003).

The use of student journaling as a research methodology provided a unique insight into the experiences of Black students, and highlighted the importance of amplifying student voices in educational research. As Tuck (2009) notes, "students' narratives can provide a powerful counter-narrative to dominant discourses" (p. 111). The study's findings have implications for teaching practices, and suggest that teachers should prioritize culturally responsive teaching, representation, and inclusivity in the classroom.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on ethnographical research through student journaling, and highlights the importance of centering student voices in educational research. By amplifying the experiences and perspectives of Black students, this study provides a nuanced understanding of the ways in which teaching practices can be improved to support the academic success and well-being of Black students.

References:

hooks, b. (1994). Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom. New York: Routledge.

Howard, T. C. (2003). "Culturally relevant pedagogy: Ingredients for critical teacher reflection." Theory into Practice, 42(3), 195-202.

Tuck, E. (2009). "Suspending damage: A letter to communities." Harvard Educational Review, 79(3), 409-427

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125 Not so smooth pathways to placement: A preliminary study of 6th grade assessment outcomes across school types in Guyana.

Dr. Les Archer

Western Kentucky Univ, Bowling Green, KY, USA

Abstract

Purpose

This study investigates how end-of-year 6th grade assessment outcomes influence high school placement across private, religious-affiliated, and public schools. It specifically examines the moderating role of teacher training—measured by the number of educators formally trained—within districts.

Theoretical Framework

Grounded in educational equity theory and decision-making frameworks in tracking and placement, this study explores how human capital influences student opportunity. The research draws on literature emphasizing the gatekeeping role of teachers in academic placement and the potential for professional development to mediate systemic bias.

Methodology:

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental design using publicly available educational datasets to examine 6th grade assessment scores and high school placement outcomes. The data were sourced from state repositories that include disaggregated student achievement results (e.g., standardized test scores) and publicly reported data with respect to number of trained teachers in each school district. The design also incorporated moderation analysis to assess the influence of district-level variables—specifically, the proportion of trained teachers.

The sample (n = 122) comprises 6th grade students across eleven school districts. Quantitative data included standardized end of year scores and high school placement outcomes. Moderation analysis was conducted to determine whether teacher training influenced the relationship between test scores and placement.

Results

Preliminary results suggest that students in private and religious schools had the highest overall placement into advanced or honors tracks. In districts with a higher proportion of trained teachers, additional data may be needed since it become difficult to identify their placement in each school sector. However, there is a greater likelihood that they are placed in public schools.

Conclusions/Recommendations

Findings highlight the importance of investing in targeted teacher training to improve the fairness and accuracy of placement decisions. School leaders and district policymakers should consider expanding professional development focused on assessment interpretation and student placement equity. Increased teacher capacity in these areas can act as a structural lever for more equitable academic outcomes during critical educational transitions.

Training - From Burnout to Balance: How to Support Teacher Wellness

10:00 - 10:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Presentation type Training
Tiffany Henderson

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243 From Burnout to Balance: How to Support Teacher Wellness

Dr. Tiffany Henderson

Gulfport Central Middle School, Gulfport, Mississippi, USA

Abstract

Teacher burnout is not just a buzzword it’s something many of us are living through. As a computer science and engineering teacher, I know the feeling of being pulled in multiple directions while still trying to show up fully for students. This reflective piece explores how I’ve started using generative AI to help manage the invisible workload that often leads to burnout. From lesson planning and differentiation to grading and communication, AI tools have become a quiet support system in my practice,not to replace me, but to give me breathing room.

Grounded in my lived experience, I introduce a wellness-centered framework I call P.A.U.S.E., which guides intentional and ethical AI use. I also share how this shift has impacted my life outside the classroom, allowing me to be more present as a wife, mother, daughter, and educator. This piece is not a technical guide but a personal reflection and practical invitation for other educators to consider how low-lift AI integration can support their well-being. My goal is to reframe the conversation around technology and remind us that tools like generative AI can serve humanity in the classroom,not just efficiency

Position Paper - High Impact Governance in a Growing Special Education Cooperative

10:00 - 10:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Presentation type Position Paper
Rod Uzat

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193 High Impact Governance in a Growing Special Education Cooperative

Dr. Rod Uzat[1], Mr. Efrain Garza[2]

[1]UTPB, Odessa, Texas, USA. [2]South Texas ISD, Mercedes, Texas, USA

Abstract

In the 2024-25 academic year, South Texas Independent School District initiated a three-district cooperative SPED service partnership with two neighboring school districts where South Texas ISD provides the services and administrative support for a revenue neutral fee. The enterprise is governed by a Management Board that meets monthly and is made up of partnering Superintendents, CFO's and Special Education Cooperative administrators. After a successful first year with both partnering districts expressing strong satisfaction regarding service delivery, student support, professional development, as well as the transparency and consensus-based operation of the Management Board, two additional districts officially joined the cooperative with the possibility of several more partners in the coming years. This situation represented a critical transitional moment in the life of the Cooperative requiring action by the Management Board to answer, "Where is the Cooperative heading?"

According to Houston and Eadie (2002), this question is one of three key questions that defines "high impact" district governance:

- What is the Cooperative now (mission, operational goals, resource allocation)?
- How is the Cooperative performing (educationally, administratively, financially)?
- Where is the Cooperative heading in the future (vision, strategic directions, long range goals)?

This paper will detail the work that was accomplished shortly before the end of the 2024-25 year and the beginning of the 2025-2026 year to complete the following tasks:

- Develop a mission and vision for the Cooperative based on common elements of the mission and vision of all partner districts.
- Launch the new mission and vision through engaging parents by raising awareness of what they can expect from the Cooperative in services and

communication as well as reporting on educational, administrative and financial progress.
- Launch the new mission and vision through engaging staff through targeted professional development.
- Engage in a limited strategic planning process in the context of the Cooperative's tri-county service area, to consider the optimum scope of the entity's expansion.
- Call on the SPED leadership team to develop a scalable management model that pairs with the Cooperative's optimum scope and best utilizes the skillset of its members while maximizing responsiveness, innovation and flexibility.
- Develop a supportive, proactive process for considering new partners and then onboarding them.

The paper will contribute to the field of educational leadership by explaining how this process and its related activities were foundational to preparing the Cooperative for the future and models best practice approaches in effective "high impact" governance for school districts.

Houston, P. D., & Eadie, D. (2002). *The board-savvy superintendent*. R&L Education.

Symposium - Navigating the tenure and promotion process.

10:00 - 10:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
5th Floor LEMOYNE
Presentation type Symposium
Stefanie Sorbet

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6 Navigating the tenure and promotion process. Hints, ideas, and suggestions to submitting your tenure packet and how to hit the ground running once hired in a tenure-track position.

Dr. Stefanie Sorbet[1], Dr. Kelly Byrd[2], Dr. Raglena Salmens[3]

[1]University of Central Arkansas, Conway, AR, USA. [2]South Alabama University, Mobile, AL, USA. [3]Eastern Kentucky University, Richmond, KY, USA

Abstract

Navigating your first tenure-track position is both challenging and exciting. This symposium is made of a panel of various tenured and tenure-track professors who will

provide insight, suggestions, and ideas on how to achieve tenure and promotion. This panel will offer ideas on how to set a schedule for success in research and work and maintaining a good balance. Join us as colleagues share personal experiences on collaborating and networking with colleagues within your department and college as well as within your field of study across other universities.

Panelists will address how to get organized as a tenure-track professor within the three major areas of scholarship, teaching, and service. Learn how to manage your time writing, researching, and teaching as well as learning key ways to document each of these in a tenure and promotion packet.

Every university has different requirements for tenure and promotion but this symposium will provide an open-forum to share experiences and provide tips and tools of the process that aims at helping all tenure-track professors submit a thorough packet for review.

This symposium focuses on the 3 pillars of academia which include:

1. **Scholarship**

   We will provide sample schedules for carving out time for research and writing. Do you have a mentor assigned to you? Do you know anyone in your department who might share in similar research interests? Have you considered conducting research related to an innovative approach being implemented in your courses? Consider which journals or publications are aligned with your field of study or expertise. Some questions to ask are: When are the due dates and how often do the journals accept submissions and publish their journal? What is the acceptance rate for the journal? Have you published a piece of your dissertation as an article?

2. **Teaching**

   We will discuss how to address ways to improve in your teaching for you students. Are you reading your student evaluations of teaching and taking some of their suggestions? Do you implement the overall feedback themes that most students listed as an area of improvement to implement next time? Have you asked a fellow colleague to sit in on one of your classes to offer feedback and suggestions? Are you present in office hours for your students at times that are convenient for both them and you?

1. **Service**

   We will share how to get involved and serve your department, college, and university as well as the community in which the university is located. Have you tapped into service learning and explored the many ways your teaching and course can give back to the community your university serves?

Compiling your portfolio

Keep everything and organize it each semester! Keep your curriculum vitae current and saved to a close place where you can add to it as you publish and as you join new committees or attend conferences. Find out what the tenure and promotion guidelines are for your college and university. Ask a fellow colleague or your mentor to see their binders or portfolio to use as a guide or reference.

Training - Writing Toward Belonging: Building Sustainable Communities for Doctoral Students through the Doctoral Student Writing Collective

10:00 - 10:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
11th Floor GRAND CHAPEL
Presentation type Training
Da'Ja' Askew

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146 Writing Toward Belonging: Building Sustainable Communities for Doctoral Students through the Doctoral Student Writing Collective

Dr. Da'Ja'Nay Askew

Jackson State University, Jackson, MS, USA

Abstract

Doctoral education, though rich in intellectual challenge, is often marked by profound isolation, lack of support, and mental health distress, especially for Black and racially minoritized students navigating predominantly White academic spaces. The Doctoral Student Writing Collective (DSWC) emerged as a response to this systemic gap, offering a transformative, student-led model grounded in equity, healing, and scholarly persistence. This training session presents the DSWC as an innovative intervention that fosters community, accountability, and academic motivation while advancing a culture of lifelong research engagement.

Established in January 2024, the DSWC has grown into a vibrant national community of over 300 doctoral students, offering weekly virtual writing sessions, mentorship opportunities, peer feedback, and social-emotional support. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) and Sense of Belonging Theory (Strayhorn, 2022), the DSWC is designed to meet doctoral students' psychological needs for

autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby enhancing intrinsic motivation and academic persistence.

This session will offer a behind-the-scenes look at the formation, structure, and success of the DSWC. Participants will engage in interactive reflection and collaborative discussion to explore how institutions can adopt similar models to meet the needs of marginalized graduate students. Presenters will share qualitative and quantitative feedback data that demonstrate DSWC's impact on student retention, productivity, mental health, and sense of belonging.

Through a culturally responsive lens, this training encourages participants to rethink how graduate education supports (or fails to support) Black doctoral students. Rather than relying solely on traditional advising models, we advocate for writing communities as essential tools of retention and transformation. Participants will leave with a replicable framework for launching similar groups within their institutions, strategies for engaging faculty and administrators in mentorship, and actionable steps to track student progress through data-informed assessment.

Ultimately, this session challenges educators and institutional leaders to reimagine doctoral support as more than academic coaching, it is about building a culture where students are seen, heard, valued, and supported in their quest to become lifelong researchers. The DSWC model exemplifies this mission by promoting healing, connection, and scholarly excellence among historically excluded communities.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Mathematics/Math Instruction

11:00 - 11:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
2nd Floor FLEUR DE LIS
Sarah Salisbury, Sarah Salisbury

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72 Developing Theory to Support Strength-Based Mathematics Education for Students with Learning Difficulties

Dr. Thomas Ricks

Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA, USA

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to use recent scientific research to support and extend strength-based theories about students with *mathematical learning difficulties* (MLD).

Some, but not all, of these students may express actual mathematical learning disabilities such as dyscalculia, dyslexia, agraphia, etc.; many others remain undiagnosed, experience unrecognized neurological tendencies, or struggle in other ways, such as with physical disabilities. This paper addresses several pressing problems in mathematics education related to these students with MLD; the general problem is that our educational systems disadvantage students with MLD by stressing primarily the mathematics and pedagogy for which these students struggle. For example, current curriculums focusing heavily on certain topics (like number or arithmetic) leave little space to explore other areas of mathematics with which students with MLD may excel. Additionally, the culturally dominant curriculums of many countries concentrating on the consumption and reproduction of itemized content benchmarks further hinder students with MLD who may better learn in other ways. A more specific problem addressed by this paper is that even the strengths-based perspectives countering medical-deficiency or difficulty-based paradigms still usually operate in conventionally emphasized areas of mathematics. A pressing need exists for theoretical development that carves our more space in the domains of mathematics, pedagogy, and disability to demonstrate there are un-emphasized areas of mathematics in which students with MLD may thrive. This paper contributes to developing strength-based narratives by expanding the theoretical terrain in which such narratives can be deployed.

This paper integrates a constellation of ideas—complexity science, Foucault-ian notions of technologies of power, mathematical anthropocentrism, biological mathematics, and info-computationalism to develop theory that helps solidify the theoretical foundations of strength-based approaches for helping students with MLD. Strength-based approaches are a nascent domain in the field of mathematics education, which field manifests surprising immaturity about MLD issues (e.g., by the low number of research publications on MLD, by the only-recent 2024 release of NCTM's Position Statement on MLD, and continued emphasis by many on explicit, systematic instruction as the primary means of helping students with MLD). Being so new, strength-based approaches understandably focus primarily on helping *individuals* with MLD improve their mathematical proficiency. The question driving this research was: *How can a systems perspective contribute to strengthening the theoretical base of strength-based approaches toward MLD*? I use constant comparative methods to develop theory for wider application. This theoretical matrix describes a continuum of systems in which students with MLD exist. Students are themselves complex systems living in an ecosystem of other nested, overlapping, intertwined, interacting, and intersecting complex systems. My theory describes how these other systems also mathematize, directly influence individuals' (with MLD) mathematizing, and may even express forms of MLD themselves. Mutually reinforcing solutions exist. I conclude with concrete recommendations for how this new expanded theory can be translated into practice for teachers, schools, government, special interest groups, and curriculum developers. In this way our mantra *Mathematics for All* can become a better reality for so many students not currently served by our current society's institutions.

148 Spatial Visualization of High School Geometry Students

Dr. Jennifer Crissey

Germantown High School, Madison, MS, USA. Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA

Abstract

Spatial ability has been defined as “the innate ability to visualize that a person has before any formal training has occurred, i.e., a person is born with ability” (Sorby, 1999, p. 21) and is comprised of spatial orientation and spatial visualization skills. Each of these facets are used in everyday life; i.e. to drive a car, parallel park or navigate to new places. Athletes use spatial visualization skills in calculating or interpreting the path of a ball or puck in order to make contact at the appropriate time. Experiences like playing sports or musical instruments, as well as playing with blocks contribute to spatial visualization skill development. Pietcsch & Jansen (2012) and Ozel et al. (2002) found that students who participated in sports had improved mental rotation and spatial skills. Gaser & Schlaug (2003) found that students who played musical instruments had increased spatial visualization skills. Gold et al. (2018) and Brosnan (1998) found that children who played with blocks outperformed those who did not in spatial ability. Baki et al. (2011), McClintock et al. (2002), Idris (2007), Hannafin et al. (2008), Tieg and Eu (2014), and Saha et al. (2010) documented the advantages of using various interventions to increase spatial visualization across age groups.

Given the importance of spatial ability, the purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of an intervention on increasing high school geometry students’ spatial visualization skills. The research questions were: Which learner characteristics predict spatial visualization as measured by the Revised Purdue Spatial Visualization Test: Rotation (PSVT:R)? To what extent does geometry instruction using technological tools increase the spatial visualization skills of high school students? To what extent do concrete models used during geometry instruction without technological tools increase the spatial visualization of high school geometry students? Which method of instruction has a more significant impact on students’ spatial visualization skills? The participants were 65 geometry students who were randomly placed in either a technology or manipulative group. Participants completed the PSVT:R at the beginning of the study for baseline spatial visualization scores. Subsequently, the PSVT:R was administered as a pretest followed by the implementation of the intervention. The manipulative group completed the intervention activities using concrete, tangible models during instruction. The technology groups completed the activities using Desmos and GeoGebra. After the intervention, participants completed the PSVT:R posttest. A few weeks after the posttest, the PSVT:R was administered again. A Repeated Measures ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were significant differences between the technology and manipulative groups.

The results for research question one indicated playing a musical instrument had a significant impact. For research question two students who used technology tools had increased spatial visualization scores. For research question three students who used concrete models showed increased spatial visualization scores. Research question four showed the group using concrete models had a greater increase than the technology group. The limitations of this study included the number of participants and the generalizability of the study.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Research Methodology

11:00 - 11:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
2nd Floor FOUNTAINBLEU
Fredrika Cowley

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94 Dissertation students' satisfaction with content professors: A quantitative study

Dr. alan webb[1], Dr. Brian Barsanti[2]

[1]The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Al, USA. [2]The University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Al, USA

Abstract

Problem Statement

After 30 years involvement in the dissertation process as a student and a professor it has become apparent that oftentimes there is a disconnect between students and overseers of the dissertation process. Students are often confused about their responsibilities in the process as well as their understanding of the responsibilities of those who oversee the process of their dissertation.

Theoretical Grounding

This study was grounded in the theoretical construct of pragmatism. Pragmatism is a philosophical paradigm which engages research issues as its principle “line of action” (James, 1907; Mead, 1934) with assiduous attention being paid to the “technical warrants” (Dewey, 1929) that emphasize “workability” (Dewey, 1929; Mead, 1934). Simply stated, pragmatism focuses upon the topic of research, utilizing whichever methods or research techniques are deemed appropriate in order to achieve consistent findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Methodology

An exploratory sequential mixed methods study was conducted in order to fill these gaps in the literature. The first strand consisted of an exploratory case study to discover the expectations of dissertation students with respect to the dissertation process. The second strand took the findings of the exploratory case study and developed a survey instrument known as the Dissertation Student Satisfaction Survey. The survey was pilot tested with a sample of 147 participants. The sample consisted of 64 individuals who were former dissertation students and 83 individuals who were presently engaged in the dissertation process.

Results

The results of this present study focused upon the satisfaction of dissertation students with their content professors. The major findings of this study are as follows: Seventy-two percent of the participants in the study were very dissatisfied with their content professors, 23% were moderately dissatisfied, 4% were moderately satisfied, and 1% were very satisfied. The participants were least satisfied with the methodological instructors (M = 2.30 on a scale of 1-10) The participants were most satisfied with the instruction they received on data collection (M = 4.99 on a scale of 1-10). The overall satisfaction from the dissertation students who participated in the study with respect to their content professors was M = 3.04 on a scale of 1-10.

Implications

The results of this study will provide a valid and reliable survey instrument for the study of dissertation students and their satisfaction with the dissertation process. Future researchers will benefit from the findings of this study in that there will now be an effective way to investigate this important topic with a survey which will measure quantitative data collected for data analysis. The results of this study will also open the door for a more qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods studies on this topic. In addition, content professors will have a better understanding of how their instruction is being received and what, if any, adjustments need to be made to their pedagogy.

Conclusion

There is a 25-page document which further explains the details of this study and its findings.

30 Cultivating Culturally Relevant Research through Endarkened Narrative Inquiry

Dr. Fredrika Cowley

The University of Memphis, Memphis, TN, USA

Abstract

This session presents *Endarkened Narrative Inquiry* (ENI) (McClish-Boyd & Bhattacharya, 2021, 2023)as an emerging qualitative methodology grounded in Black feminist thought (Collins, 2002), endarkened feminist epistemology (Dillard, 2000), womanism (Phillips, 2006), and narrative inquiry (Kim, 2016). Created as a response to dominant Western research paradigms, ENI centers the cultural knowledge and lived experiences of Black women as valid, valuable, and essential to educational research. Through this lens, storytelling is not simply a research method, it becomes a mode of liberation, resistance, and knowledge production.

Drawing on a qualitative study that explored the experiences of Black women professional staff at a Historically White Institution (HWI) in the Mid-South, this session will focus on three key areas: (1) the background and development of ENI, (2) its foundational tenets, and (3) how it was applied methodologically in this study to center the voices and narratives of Black women as co-creators of knowledge. While the broader study includes findings and implications, this session will focus primarily on the methodological dimension of the work.

Guided by Patricia Hill Collins' Black feminist theory—especially the tenets of self-definition, controlling images, labor and family oppression, and rethinking activism—ENI provided a framework that honored the full humanity of participants. The study revealed that, despite the absence of formal professional counterspaces at the institution, participants regularly engaged in intentional and personal acts of everyday resistance rooted in identity, boundary-setting, and community.

Learning Objectives:
By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the epistemological foundations and development of Endarkened Narrative Inquiry.
2. Identify the core tenets of ENI and their alignment with Black feminist thought.
3. Consider how ENI can be implemented in their own research to amplify marginalized voices and disrupt traditional academic norms.

Endarkened Narrative Inquiry challenges researchers to embrace frameworks that recognize the richness and complexity of participants' lived experiences. Examples from the study will be used in this session to show how ENI was used to foster trust, co-

create meaning, and protect the integrity of participants' narratives through deliberate involvement and reflexive practices. ENI challenges researchers to rethink what rigorous, moral, and transformational research may look like when it is based on culturally competent frameworks, especially for those who engage with historically marginalized populations. Participants will leave with a deepened understanding of

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86 Dissertation students' expectations of content professors: A qualitative case study

Dr. alan webb, Dr. Arleene Breaux

The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Alabama, USA

Abstract

Problem Statement

After 30 years involvement in the dissertation process as a student and a professor it has become apparent that oftentimes there is a disconnect between students and overseers of the dissertation process. Students are often confused about their responsibilities in the process as well as their understanding of the responsibilities of those who oversee the process of their dissertation. One of the most important relationships involved in the dissertation process is between the dissertation student and their content professors. A literature search which extended over the past 15 years uncovered four studies which have focused upon this relationship.

Theoretical Grounding

This research endeavor was grounded theoretically on the basis of the philosophical assumptions of constructivism. Ontologically it is assumed that multiple realities exist and are constructed by means of lived experiences and social interactions. Epistemologically it is assumed that reality is co-constructed between the researcher and the researched. Axiologically it is assumed that individual values are honored and negotiated among individuals. As such, it is also assumed that research is value-laden. Methodologically it is assumed that research is emergent and that findings are best attained through consensus (Lincoln et al. 2001).

Methodology

A qualitative exploratory case study was conducted in order to further explore the relationship between the dissertation student and their content professors. The study consisted of semi-structured interviews with 57 participants. Twenty-three participants were present dissertation students and 34 participants were former

dissertation students. The interview questions were derived from the research question, “What expectations do dissertation students have of their content professors.

Results

The overall finding of this study was that most of the dissertation students who were interviewed were unsure of what expectations they should have with respect to their content professors. Many of the responses were hesitant and labored. A large number of the participants expressed that they had always wondered what they should expect from their content professors. A large number expressed the opinion that if they had been aware of what was expected of their content professors their dissertation experience would have been more pleasant. The responses from the participants in the study were categorized into three themes. With respect to the dissertation process the participants expected their content professors to (1) teach them how to do research, (2) teach them how to do a dissertation, and (3) teach them how to navigate the process of doing a dissertation.

Implications

The findings of this study will have implications for understanding the dissertation process, for improving the relationship between content professors and dissertation students The previous studies which have been conducted isolated the problem of expectations. The findings of these studies implied that there was a lack of understanding between what dissertation students considered to be the responsibilities of their content professors and what the content professors considered to be their responsibilities to the student. The findings of this study will clarify for content professors what dissertation students expect from them. With this information the dissertation process can be improved.

Symposium - Social Media Literacy as an Entry Point for Teaching the Ethical Use of Generative AI to K-12 Students

11:00 - 11:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
2nd Floor Marigny
Presentation type Symposium
Patricia Elmore

168 Social Media Literacy as an Entry Point for Teaching the Ethical Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) to K-12 Students

Dr. Patricia Elmore, Dr. Ashley Virgin, Dr. Kimberly Jack, Ms. Kali Kirby, Ms. Tori Hall, Mr. Tucker Constable, Mr. Charles Prince

Athens State University, Athens, AL, USA

Abstract

Topic: Social Media Literacy as an Entry Point for Teaching Ethical Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) to K-12 Students.

Topic's Significance

The use of generative artificial intelligence (GAI) has become commonplace even amongst the youngest of students (McGinty & Rohaley, 2025; Song et al., 2025). Across the field of education, many teachers are wrestling with consequences of technologies like ChatGPT and Midjourney being easily available and increasingly more adept at imitating (and potentially someday *replacing*) the human voice and mind (Barad, 2003; Kalantzis & Cope, 2025). There are social benefits and harms to these technologies (Sperling et al., 2024; Walter, 2024). Scholars argue that teachers must teach GAI literacy (Bibi et al., 2024; Risbakk, 2024), and that social media literacy can be an entry point to teaching students how to be ethical users of GAI (Flynn, 2025; Hobbs, 2024; Stewart & Rodgers, 2025).

Overview of the Session

This paneled session will explore research-based practices and theories for using social media literacy as an entry point for teaching K-12 students: **1)** how to recognize mis- and disinformation generated by AI on platforms like *Tik-Tok, Facebook, YouTube*, and *X*, and **2)** how to be ethical users of GAI tools at school and beyond.

Panelist Summary

- Panelist 1 is a current Assistant Professor of Secondary English Education. Panelist 1's role will be to serve as moderator and to provide an initial overview of social media literacy and the role generative artificial intelligence (GAI) plays in creating mis- and disinformation.
- Panelist 2 is a current Assistant Professor of Special Education and will share research-based practices on the topic of using social media literacy as an entry point for teaching students how to ethically use AI tools at school but also in their personal lives.
- Panelist 3 is a current Professor of English and will provide a brief overview of GAI literacy as a "new" literacy impacting all grade levels and disciplines in education.

- Panelists 4 and 5 are current undergraduate students who plan to become English teachers.
- Panelist 6 is a current undergraduate student who plans to become a history professor.
- Panelist 7 is a current undergraduate student who plans to become an English professor. The role of Panelists 4-7 will be to offer “next generation” perspectives and possible strategies related to this topic.

The goal of this interactive symposium is for audience members to engage in a thoughtful discussion of how social media literacy can be used as an entry point for AI literacy in K-12 classes, and specifically, how to guide our students towards becoming ethical users of these new technologies.

Discussion/Paper Lecture - Curriculum, Early Childhood, Parental Involvement

11:00 - 11:50 Friday, 7th November, 2025
3rd Floor ST. CHARLES
Kim Godwin

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180 Review, Research, and Revise: A Case Study in Curriculum Development

Dr. Kim Godwin, Dr. Everett Singleton, Dr. Jim Rost

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Abstract

High-impact practices (HIPs) are not a new concept in higher education, but how often are we intentional about inclusion in our curriculum? Kuh (2008) focused research on these practices and their impact on student learning and future career preparation. Considering this and other foundational theories such as Astin (1993) and Tinto (1993), this discussion follows the curriculum redevelopment of a graduate program in higher education at one institution.

In the fall of 2024, the Master of Education in Administration & Supervision with a concentration in higher education began a year-long process of review, research, and revision of the higher education core courses to enhance the offerings to meet the ever-changing needs of higher education and student affairs practitioners. The degree program is focused on a scholar-practitioner concept, but has lost much of the practitioner emphasis over recent years. With the assistance of a small internal grant, faculty and administrative practitioners were gathered with one purpose: to revise the program with specific and intentional emphasis on high-impact practice implementation.

HIPs frequently include first-year seminars, undergraduate research, learning communities, and other undergraduate-focused concepts. The students of this study are graduate students but fulfill a unique perspective, as they are often the administrators coordinating HIPs for campuses through service learning, study abroad, internships, and social engagement activities. The charge of the workgroup was to introduce HIPs to these students for their own course learning and also for their career development.

The discussion focuses on the process, findings, successes, and setbacks of the year-long working group. Measurable data of student success is not available; instead, this discussion is intended to promote faculty development and a team focus on curriculum redesign.

This roundtable presentation will share the journey of redesigning our graduate program, highlighting the collaborative process, key steps we took, and what we learned along the way. Our three main goals for the discussion are:

- To look at how using high-impact practices (HIPs) purposefully can improve graduate learning and better prepare students for their careers.
- To share practical strategies for how faculty and practitioners can work together effectively during curriculum redesign.
- To reflect on the challenges and successes of including real-world, practitioner-based experiences in a scholar-practitioner model.

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187 Empowering Non-Speaking Students: Educator-Led AAC Implementation Using PECS

Ms. Anna Grace Ashurst, Ms. Izzie McAllister, Dr. Mark Wildmon

Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA

Abstract

This presentation shares the results of an applied research initiative aimed at improving functional communication in non-speaking students through the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), with a particular focus on the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and the Verbal Behavior Approach. The project, *Bridges to Speak*, was implemented across six school districts and involved collaborative efforts with 35 educational professionals, including special education teachers and speech-language pathologists (SLPs).

AAC offers a vital means for students with limited or no spoken language to express needs, interact socially, and engage academically. While evidence supports the effectiveness of AAC systems like PECS, implementation in schools is often limited by a lack of training, coaching, and interprofessional collaboration. To address this gap, our

team provided hands-on AAC training and Behavioral Skills Training (BST) to educators in nine self-contained classrooms serving 16 students, as well as a classroom-wide PECS system in a kindergarten setting.

This session will present quantitative and qualitative data on:

- Student progress across PECS phases;
- Teacher fidelity in implementing PECS;
- Educator perceptions of the training model; and
- Observed generalization of communication skills across settings.

Data demonstrated significant improvements in both student communication outcomes and educator implementation accuracy. These gains were sustained as students progressed to advanced PECS phases and used communication skills beyond structured teaching sessions. Attendees will also learn about key implementation challenges, particularly around generalization to home settings, and how those were addressed through collaborative planning and caregiver involvement.

The session will conclude with practical, research-informed strategies for:

- Identifying students who may benefit from AAC;
- Supporting communication goals through educator–SLP collaboration; and
- Delivering scalable AAC training for teachers and families.

Findings support the importance of educator involvement in AAC implementation and highlight how interdisciplinary training can improve outcomes for non-speaking students. This applied research offers a replicable model for supporting inclusive communication practices in K–12 educational settings.

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8 Homeschooling as Educational Choice: Understanding Parental Motivations Beyond COVID-19

Ms. Isadora McAllister, Ms. Anna Ritchie Lewis, Ms. Valerie Hill, Ms. Alexandria Davis, Ms. Tammie Bowles, Ms. Marsha Hasenoehrl, Dr. Kenny Anthony, Dr. Mark Wildmon

Mississippi State University, Starkville, MS, USA

Abstract

Families' decisions to homeschool emerge from varied and nuanced motivations, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This study examined homeschooling motivations among 201 U.S. parents, investigating whether these

motivations differed based on demographics and pandemic timing. Participants completed an online survey assessing six domains of homeschooling motivation. Findings revealed that proactive motivations, parental responsibility, value alignment, and family-centered benefits were most strongly endorsed, while child-specific needs and concerns about traditional schooling were less prevalent. Surprisingly, no significant motivational differences emerged between pandemic-era and pre-pandemic homeschoolers, suggesting fundamental alignment in educational priorities regardless of timing. However, demographic variables significantly influenced motivational patterns: parents' education level, employment status, and weekly work hours correlated with specific motivational domains. These findings highlight the intentional, values-driven nature of homeschooling decisions and carry implications for policymakers, educators, and researchers striving to understand and support diverse educational pathways.