



**17th Annual Arts,
Research, & Scholarship
SYMPOSIUM**

**GRADUATE
ABSTRACT BOOK**

May 2, 2023



CABRINI
UNIVERSITY





17th Annual Arts, Research & Scholarship Symposium

Tuesday, May 2, 2023 ~ 5pm – 9pm

Abstracts

Agnew, Shannon

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Novice Elementary Teachers’ Experiences of Formal and Informal Supports During First-Year Teaching”

The purpose of this study is to examine novice teachers’ experiences of formal and informal supports during their first year of teaching. This study analyzes how well teachers are supported during their first year of teaching by looking at what supports, programs, and policies schools and districts have implemented to assist these teachers during an overwhelming time. The study draws on outside research examining early career teacher attrition, struggles and challenges many first-year teachers face, as well as formal and informal supports that have helped teachers to successfully complete their first year of teaching. This research is important because it shows school administration specific areas they can support their novice teachers, which ultimately can lead to reducing attrition rates and preventing some of the challenges novice teachers experience. Data was collected through surveying and interviewing first year and early career teachers from various school districts and various elementary grades from my friend network to answer the research question of “In what ways do novice elementary teachers experience supports, both formal and informal, during their first year of teaching?” Findings will be discussed at the Symposium.

Allen, Kelly B.

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Elementary Teachers’ Utilization of Social and Emotional Learning to Address Student Behaviors”

This mini phenomenological study seeks to better understand elementary school teacher perceptions of how social and emotional learning should be used to address student misbehavior. Recognizing the negative impact of exclusionary discipline and its disparate impact on students of color and those with disabilities, the researcher is interested in further exploring how SEL can be best leveraged to support positive school climates and prosocial behavior and ultimately prevent the use of exclusionary discipline. A sample of two experienced elementary school teachers with graduate degrees in education and over 10 years of classroom experience participated in semi-structured interviews. Even though this is a small data collection, emerging findings on the importance of nurturing a caring classroom community and teaching emotion regulation provide helpful suggestions about the need for additional research.

Berman, Matthew

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Potential Impact of Team Sport Participation in Middle School Students”

This phenomenologically-inspired mini-study explores the characteristics of student athletes at the middle school level that affect academic outcomes, as well as potential differences in characteristics of student athletes and non-student athlete middle school students. The identification of these characteristics can aid teachers and administrators in being more effective educators and advocates for both student athletes and non-student athletes. Current research suggests that participation in scholastic sports can have positive impacts on students at all levels of education. Literature also suggests that sports can be utilized in other ways to achieve educational outcomes, like assisting in the education of both content and skills in multiple disciplines. Despite the abundance of athletic departments in school districts, there is a lack of current research focused on observable characteristics that student athletes possess that have a connection to academic performance. If there exists a positive correlation between scholastic sports and academic achievement, it is important that all educational actors promote the accessibility of opportunities for students to participate in scholastic athletics, including opportunities for students who are unable to achieve a roster spot on official middle school teams. The findings of this study will be available at the Cabrini Symposium on May 2, 2023.

Berry, Jackie

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Szpara

“Literacy Self-Efficacy and the Novice Teacher”

New teachers entering the field of elementary education have a vital role in teaching young children how to read. A novice teacher’s (teachers who have been teaching for less than 3 years) self-efficacy around their ability to teach their students how to read is critical to their confidence and the success of their students. This phenomenological study investigates the lived experiences that novice teachers have with their self-efficacy around teaching literacy in an elementary school classroom. This study is significant as it investigates what experiences, both positive and negative, novice teachers have had teaching literacy during the first years in their teaching journey. Through one-on-one interviews, this study reveals the personal accounts of two novice elementary school teachers. The findings of this study will be available at the Symposium in May of 2023. These findings will be helpful to administrators and school literacy leaders to help support and nurture novice teachers in their essential work of teaching literacy in an elementary classroom.

Blaisse, Lyndsay

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“Using Goal Setting to Increase Upper Elementary Reading Achievement”

Low reading achievement at the elementary level is an ongoing problem in elementary education. To improve overall reading achievement among fifth-grade readers, this study aims to investigate the potential benefits of incorporating goal setting and ownership into reading instruction. This action research study aimed to investigate the impact of goal-setting on upper elementary reading achievement. The research question was: Can goal-setting increase fifth-grade students' reading achievement? The study utilized 11 fifth-grade students in a public elementary school over one month. The participants were selected based on their below grade-level reading proficiency. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The quantitative reading fluency and comprehension data was collected through bi-weekly progress monitoring assessments, while the qualitative data surrounding student motivations and engagement was collected through student surveys. While the results have not been finalized, it is predicted that the results will indicate that goal-setting will have a significant impact on the participants' reading achievement. It is hypothesized that the participants who set intentional reading goals and received feedback on their progress will show an improvement in their reading fluency and comprehension. It is also predicted that the study will find that the participants' motivation and engagement in reading will increase. Overall, this study will hopefully suggest that goal-setting can be an effective strategy to increase reading achievement among upper elementary students. The implications of these findings for educators and researchers will be available by the Symposium as well as recommendations for future research.

Bolden, Melissa

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Impact of Socio-Emotional Learning Supports”

There are considerable research findings of Social-Emotional Learning elementary, middle and high school initiatives from the perspectives of school-based leadership. However, there are limited research findings on a district-wide Social Emotional Learning initiative from the perspective of school-based leadership. The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of school principals' views of what are the impacts of a district's socio-emotional learning support for students in grades K-12 in a well-resourced public school.

School principals from one suburban school district were solicited to participate in this phenomenological study. The participants were three building principals. The researcher collected data through a focus group. The findings showed that all building principals saw evidence that all school staff valued social-emotional learning in their school buildings. However, Social Emotional Learning implementation of school-wide practices to support student staff differed.

Boylan Free, Renee

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Exploring the Impact of ABA for Students with Autism with Known Histories of Trauma: The Lived Experiences of Elementary Special Education Teachers”

Post-COVID, educators have experienced dramatic increases in student stress and trauma, impacting student achievement and behavior in the classroom. The purpose of this research study is to explore the experiences of elementary special education teachers who have supported students with known histories of trauma and examine the impacts, both positive and negative, of ABA for students with autism who have experienced childhood trauma. Because a significant percentage of students with disabilities are impacted by trauma every year, it is essential to examine the experiences of the teachers who support these students and determine what, if any, next steps, need to be taken to ensure special education teachers have the proper supports and training to meet the needs of all students, particularly those impacted by trauma. If this study reveals significant challenges in implementing ABA with students impacted by trauma, or the experience of servicing students with trauma backgrounds varies significantly from those students who have not experienced trauma, School Administrators and Special Education Supervisors may need to look differently at how they are supporting special education teachers, post-COVID, in order to meet the needs of our students with disabilities. Participants for this study will be drawn from a convenience sampling of elementary special education teachers from schools in suburban Southeastern Pennsylvania. Participants are elementary special education teachers who have supported students with known histories of trauma, as reported to the school by parents, care-givers, social workers, other social service workers or as documented in student records. Data for this mini-study will be collected through 2-3 open-ended, semi-structured interviews. This data has not yet been collected. Data will be collected, analyzed and findings will be presented at the 2023 Research Symposium at Cabrini University in May 2023.

Brewer, Julianna

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Building Inclusive Practices Within General Education Classrooms”

This study examines the practices implemented within general education classes to encourage the inclusion of students with low incidence disabilities. Although many students with low incidence disabilities are enrolled in general education classrooms, general educators are rarely trained or supported in the academic and social participation of these students. During the fall of 2022 and spring 2023 within the Phantom School District, a mixed grouping of general education and special education teachers participated in surveys, interviews and small focus groups. This research will examine how general educators are building meaningful relationships with students with low incidence disabilities as well as building meaningful relationships with their peers. The knowledge and perspective gained will help determine the current barriers teachers are facing and offer recommendations within the district to build more inclusive programs and encourage meaningful inclusive relationships between students and staff alike.

Coni, Anastasia

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Exploring the Impact of Storytelling in Raising Cultural Proficiency, in Increasing Student Voice and Choice, and in Implementing Equitable Practices for Multilingual Learners”

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore the impact of storytelling in raising cultural proficiency, in increasing student voice and choice, and in implementing equitable practices for multilingual learners. Multilingual learners are the fastest growing population, yet the learning rate and academic performance remains significantly lower than their peers. They often need a safe outlet in order to bring silent voices to the surface and create counternarratives. They need to be visible, feel validated for their identity, valued for their contributions, and victorious for their accomplishments, cultural backgrounds, and linguistic assets. Green Card Voices and Strickland’s (2022) *Composing Storylines of Possibilities* book are some examples that offer many insights on the impact of sharing stories. There are however limited research findings on the impact of storytelling in raising cultural proficiency and increasing student voice and choice. Semi structured interviews with open ended questions and probes are utilized in seeking insights on this topic. The participants are educators from an online group that after watching and listening to a selected story and a TedTalk will respond to questions via virtual interview. Their responses will be collected, analyzed, and conclusions will be shared. Empowering students to harvest and cultivate their own story is a starting point for advocacy too as no one can write another’s story in a more authentic way. More research and studies however need to be completed in this area that could possibly shed light and provide more or less evidence of this approach.

Custer, Gina

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Exploring Classroom Strategies and Practices for English Language Learners (ELLs) in Preschool”

A common problem that teachers face in the preschool level, is teaching students who cannot communicate in English. The purpose of the study was to discover the best ways to help minimize the language barrier for ELL learners at the preschool level. It also provides preschool teachers with strategies and practices to use in the classroom that will benefit their ELL students. By implementing different classroom techniques for ELL students, it helped their progress in their language development. The case studied two ELL students, whose background consists of Russian and Chinese. All participants are a part of The Children’s School of Cabrini College. The school is well resourced, and the researcher predominantly worked with families who are middle to upper class. The qualitative methods consisted of teacher observations, check lists, lesson plans, and parent surveys. In this study, the teacher implemented two different strategies bi-weekly: using visuals to help reinforce behavior and routines, reading engaging stories and using picture flashcards to help with vocabulary and recognition, watching and singing nursesey rhymes in Chinese, and learning the Cyrillic Alphabet (Russian). The teacher recorded the outcomes, and the findings will be shared at the Symposium.

Daou, Maral

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“From The Perspective of Teachers and Administrators, ‘What is the Impact of the Use of Substitute Teachers and Paid Time Off to Address Teacher Burnout?’”

Teachers experience stress from many different sources, including unmotivated students, maintaining discipline, time pressures, workload, coping with change, being evaluated by others, dealings with colleagues, self-esteem, status, administration and management, and poor working conditions. Stress coping strategies include physiological, situational, and cognitive approaches (Manning et al, 2020). The objective of this qualitative study is to understand what is the impact of the use of substitute teachers and paid time off to address teacher burnout.

The research question used in this study is the central phenomenon of the study on how workplace context influences stress management in educators. What led to this study was a recent report that a staggering 55 percent of educators say they are thinking about leaving the profession earlier than planned, due to the pandemic and everything that comes with it (Walker, 2022). Semi-Structured interviews will be conducted with 2-3 teachers, with 5 to 10 years of experience. The interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis via google forms.

Davenport, Divine

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“The Miseducation of the Black Student: Institutional Supports That Foster a Sense of Belonging for Black Students at PWIs”

This research examines the black student experience at a predominately white institution with institutional supports that foster a sense of belonging that assists with persistence to degree completion. At this time, the retention rates for black students at predominately white institutions are inconsistent due to the acting resources and support systems put in place in the campus environment. Institutions seek multiple solutions to increase these retention rates by adding supports specifically catered to black students. In turn, black students potentially face issues regarding sense of belonging, racism, lack of representation, and many other factors that can potentially impact their probability of completing their degree. By incorporating data collected from in-depth interviews, focus groups, and archival data 4 participants of this specific demographic of students spoke on their current or past experiences of enduring their journey at a predominately white institution. This study will challenge the support efforts given by the institution for black students to persist to degree completion. The research argues that while institutions give these supports to black students how are they keeping them accurately represented and maintained to fulfill its purpose. The analysis shows that there is a gap between what the institution is systemically creating for black students to induct themselves into versus how these specific supports actually cater to the black student experience. The researcher concludes that while institutional supports are available for black students those resources are not maintained and represented in the favor of the black student but rather the representation of the institution itself.

Drummond (Di Siro), Teresa

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“The Effects of Homework on First Graders’ Reading Comprehension”

For decades educators, policy-makers, researchers, and parents have participated in the controversial debate surrounding homework. Within the last 5 to 10 years, there has been an uptick in reports stating that the link between homework and academic achievement is weak, especially for elementary aged students. This has led several school districts across the country to revise their homework policies, many districts now just want students to focus on reading at home. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects homework has on first graders’ reading comprehension. Primary data was collected from the test group and the control group in this study. The results will be available at the Symposium.

Duffy, Christine

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Social Emotional and Self Care Practices of Private, Public, and Parochial Elementary Teachers and the Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic”

There is little research regarding the self-care practices and how it affects educators and their students. This qualitative study aims to focus on private, public, and parochial school grade level teachers in a suburban township outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The study hopes to provide teachers/educators with the knowledge and tools to support their personal mental health during unprecedented educational times. This will aim to include encouraging them to implement self-care practices within their personal routines, prioritizing self-care practices such as exercise, meditation, and incorporating social emotional learning practices in their classrooms to promote healthy emotional management for students of all age levels. The researcher will use a survey, one on one interviews, as well as a curriculum audit in order to gain triangulation. For my EDD 787 course, I will be distributing a survey about social emotional well-being and self-care practices during COVID-19 and beyond. The survey will include 8-10 questions of Likert scaled questions and short answer questions through the digital resource of Google Form. The survey will ask Likert scale questions and short answer questions that will pertain to the social emotional learning topic. Following the completion of the surveys by the participants, I plan to deeply analyze the answers for further understanding of my research topic of teachers’ social emotional well-being and self-care practices. The survey will last for at least 10-12 minutes to gather thorough qualitative data. Once I have collected all the data from the survey, I will analyze and draw themes from the answers provided by the participants. At the time of the Symposium, I should have the data collected and analyzed and have identified themes and results from the completed surveys.

Eposito, Gabriel

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Using Music to Teach Language and How It Affects the Brain”

Throughout our academic careers starting from when we were children, we all have witnessed many lessons in which we were forced to memorize somewhat dry, lackluster information which barely related to our lives or interests. We would scramble frantically to obtain the best notes, spend hours feverishly committing phrases, sentences, and even paragraphs to memory, only to realize that after the test had passed, we would forget most of the information in a matter of months. However, why is it that we can still easily recall some of the most obscure information from our childhood schooling if the facts were set to a melody or rhythm? What is firing and activating in the brain when vibrations (notes) are combined with learning, and why does it work so much better than plain rote memorization. I have always wondered about these types of pedagogical mysteries in my younger years, but never made the deliberate effort to find out. Therefore, I have been committing my time and research to figure out why these techniques work so well, and how we can establish well respected, quality curriculums based on musical and interactive instruction. Through a short qualitative research project in EDD782, I discovered that music even affects teacher performance in a positive way, on a subconscious level. I determined that these effects are legitimate, and quite significant when compared to a standard classroom without music. Through an intro survey, pre-study interview and post-study interview, I concluded that although some facts are known regarding affective instruction with music, much valid research is still needed in order to gain respect and legitimacy in the overall education field.

Eubanks, Aisha

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Colleen Lelli

“Examining Trauma-informed Practices in a Title 1 Urban School: Educators’ Perspectives”

There is an increasing need for service to the most vulnerable communities with high Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to identify prevention strategies that support and reduce the potential risk of high ACE scores. However, few studies focus on the perspectives of educators and education support professionals working directly in schools within communities where African-American/Black students have disproportionate rates of community or personal traumatic experiences known as complex trauma. The goal of this study is to examine current perspectives regarding incorporating trauma-informed practices in a middle school deemed an under-resourced, low socio-economic school district or Title 1 urban school, which has a high percentage of African-American/Black students experiencing complex trauma (Pumariega et al., 2022), by conducting a qualitative phenomenological study that provides open-ended surveys, interviews, and the collection of artifacts from staff working in education. The perceptions of educators and education support professionals addressed the priority of using trauma-informed practices, using practices to connect to students, consistency of use within specific settings, policy-driven barriers, school-wide challenges, outcomes, and managing work-life balance. Most significantly, this study found that the perceptions of educators and education support professionals included useful intervention strategies that can guide the implementation of trauma-informed practices in schools. By examining the educator and education support professionals’ perspectives, recommendations of trauma-informed intervention strategies helpful in Title 1 urban schools are identified to establish a positive learning environment for African-American/Black students experiencing traumatic and challenging events.

Felder, Stephanie

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Examining the Perceptions and Practices of Teachers Implementing Culturally Relevant Social Emotional Learning in High Schools”

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to examine the current use of SEL in schools and examine whether in its current form, the pedagogy meets the social and emotional needs of students of color as delivered by secondary educators. T Academy Charter High School uses the Caring School Community model created by Collaborative Classrooms. Collaborative Classrooms has been designated as a CASEL SElect program that promotes social emotional learning for k-8 grade students. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) website, the goal of CASEL is to help make evidence-based social and emotional learning an integral part of education from preschool through high school. T Academy is a k-12 school. As such we have bridged the Caring School Community model to our high school. The teachers at T Academy are also participating in ongoing professional developments surrounding Culturally Relevant Teaching and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. The goals of this project are to make the use of SEL meaningful and engaging for high school students the culturally relevant teaching pedagogy. Social Emotional Learning can broadly be understood as the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Fisher-Glass, Kathleen

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Principal Perceptions of Their Role as Local Education Agency Representative”

Although the literature is rich with research regarding principal perceptions related to a variety of their roles and responsibilities, inquiry regarding the leadership role of principals who serve as local education agency representatives (LEA) is lacking. Given the increasing number of students receiving special education services school principals as LEA representatives, are being tasked with LEA responsibilities at a significantly greater frequency. The posed research question: How do principals navigate their role and execute their responsibilities as LEA representatives in public-school setting, in the development and refinement of IEPs? The purpose of this ethnographically informed phenomenological study is to explore principal leader perceptions related to their role as LEA representatives. Additionally, this study will examine the supports which underpin the performance of principals as LEA representatives. This study directly examines the perspectives of two principal leaders who actively engage in individual education planning as LEA representatives. The primary focus of this research is principal leadership relative to their role as LEA representatives. Interview data will be analyzed through coding and categorizing. Given the need for effective leadership in the development of individualized educational plans this research effort will be framed through a transformational leadership lens. The results from this research will be presented at the Symposium.

Gabriele, Erin

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Critical Thinking Skills: Examining Student, Faculty and Employer Perceptions and The Effectiveness of College Curriculum Instruction for Post-Graduate Success”

The term critical thinking is commonly used in academia and literature references a multitude of ways to define this term. Amidst the complexity of the concept to demonstrate critical thinking skills, over the past few years it continues to be one of the top skills employers seek in college graduates (NACE, 2022). While some research has focused on the skills needed for undergraduate college students to be career ready to enter the workforce, this study specifically examined the faculty and undergraduate college students’ perceptions of what it means to critically think and the impact of course curriculum to prepare students for internships and post-graduate success. This qualitative phenomenological study design collected data using semi-structure interviews. Emergent themes will be shared at the Research, Arts Symposium on May 2, 2023. Implications of the study provides insight on how to incorporate sample behaviors of critical thinking in curriculum and co-curricular programming as well as the recommendation for increased dialogue among faculty and students to define critical thinking, the importance of this soft skill, and its connection to workforce. Results will be available at the Symposium.

Gachelin, Sasha

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“In The Perceptions of Teachers in an Approved Private School Serving Predominantly African American Boys Who Have Experienced Trauma, What Works in the Curriculum, Pedagogy and Climate to Support Reading Progress?”

This study aims to explore the perceptions of teachers who work at an approved private school serving predominantly African American boys who have experienced trauma and what works in the curriculum, pedagogy, and climate to support reading progress. Previous research has shown disparities among students based on race and socioeconomic status. Students who have experienced trauma may have difficulty learning, which will continue to expand the achievement gap. This study is important in understanding how to work with this population of bright students who have been laden with low expectations. This study was developed using open-ended questions asked by the researcher. The results will be available at the Symposium.

Graham, Julian

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Ronald Whitaker

“Career Technical Education Programs for Postsecondary Student Success: A Phenomenological Study”

African American males who attend high schools that do not offer equitable Career Technical Education (CTE) Programs are less engaged in their education, graduate at low rates, and have minimal postsecondary success (Xing & Gordon, 2021). Prior research has identified the success of providing CTE programs in high schools and the need for CTE programs to help mitigate the risk of the decline in the workforce labor population (Association for Career & Technical Education, 2022). The purpose of the phenomenological study is to explore what African American males who formerly attended high schools in low socioeconomic areas that offer CTE programs perceive, through their lived experiences, are the specific CTE courses and perceived benefits and failures of the CTE programs that enabled them to be engaged in their education and contributed to their postsecondary success. The phenomenological research study design will provide the opportunity to capture data over time through in-depth semi-structured interviews with former African American males who graduated from CTE programs in Philadelphia, PA, to explore the details of the participants' beliefs and feelings based on their experiences. Semi-structured interviews will be clustered and analyzed through the Nvivo 14 software to discover patterns of participant responses that will emerge into sub-themes for the research questions. This research study can discover a standard transferable CTE curriculum used by schools that offer CTE programs where students are engaged, graduate at high rates, and continue in careers that contribute to the country's labor force.

Hagan, Maria

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“A Study in the Use of Heart Word Mapping (Orthographic Mapping) to Improve First-Grade Sight Word Knowledge and Reading Levels”

The purpose of this research is to show the effects of Heart Word Mapping (orthographic mapping) on a student's sight word acquisition. It focuses on looking further into the practice of orthographic mapping along with its benefits and barriers. It connects a student's sight word knowledge with the student's reading level and shows the intertwined relationship they share. The research touches on phonemic awareness and the important role it plays in developing as a student, more specifically a reader. This research was driven by the overwhelming number of students that were below average in sight word acquisition in my first-grade classroom. The action research focused on six first-grade students from a suburban public school in Pennsylvania. The six students were made up of three females and three males with 50% of the students being African American, 33% Hispanic, and 17% Asian. Also, 67% of the students sampled are considered to be economically disadvantaged. None of the sample students are considered to be English Learners (EL) and none of them have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The qualitative methods of collecting data were student surveys, sight word testing, and reading levels. The findings will be available at the Symposium.

Hanrahan, Sarah

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Engaging White Teachers in Urban Education: A Closer Look at SEED”

Seeking Educational Excellence and Diversity, or SEED, is a nationwide organization in which educators come together to build community, share stories, and engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion work. This phenomenological study investigates the ways in which participation in the SEED program impacts white teachers’ reflections on and lived experiences in teaching students from diverse backgrounds. Currently, Urban schools are composed mostly of students of color with classrooms led mostly by white teachers. Due to institutionalized racism and other oppressive systems, white people and people of color have vastly different lived experiences in our country. This creates a disconnect between students and teachers. White teachers may be unaware of the privilege they bring into classrooms and the ways in which they perpetuate these oppressive systems. By taking a deeper look at the ways in which white teachers unpack their own identities and hear the stories of others, we might gain deeper insight into how teachers can find common ground with their students and better support them. This study may serve as an entry point into more culturally responsive teaching that both students and teachers will benefit from.

Hayes, Matthew

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Teacher Retention: Understanding Factors that Impact Teacher Retention at Title 1 Schools”

The research conducted in this study will seek to better understand the characteristics that influence the decisions of educators to remain in historically under-performing schools. This research is critical to school district retention plans in order to better provide consistent and quality education to students. Through a combination of surveys and interviews, a variety of participants at a selected Title 1 school in an urban setting will provide their perspectives on the factors that led to their decision to remain at a historically low performing Title 1 school. Participants in the study will have more than 5 years experience in education and more than 3 years experience at the specific school site. Participant responses will aim to provide insight on the reasons that they remained at their school and will be assessed to determine commonalities. Specifically, thematic analysis will be used to determine commonalities and trends that influence educators’ decisions to remain in Title 1 schools. It is anticipated that leadership style, work environment, and financial incentives will be common factors that affect educators' decisions to remain at school sites throughout their career. If the research yields the expected outcomes the results will be beneficial to schools and school districts in shaping policy to help identify practices that influence the retention of quality educational staff members.

Kelly, Janet

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“In the Perceptions and Lived Experiences of Head Start Pre-K teachers, How Do They Create and Maintain STEM Learning Opportunities for Young Children? What Are the Outcomes and Impacts of These Activities?”

Although the literature is abundant with research regarding the benefits of STEM education, the focus in curriculum tends to be literacy and mathematics first and foremost. The purpose of this ethnographically informed phenomenological study is to explore perceptions and lived experiences of PreK teachers and their perceptions of STEM education and how do they create and maintain STEM learning opportunities for young children. Additionally, the study will examine the potential supports needed to promote STEM experiences for PreK Head Start students. The primary focus of this research is explore how to best support PreK Head Start teachers in enhancing STEM experiences for their students.

Lawrence, Victoria

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“From Trauma-Informed to Trauma-Therapy: How Can Experts in the Community Help Teachers Create a More Therapeutic Approach to Trauma-Informed Practices?”

Schools face an increase demand to support the mental well-being of students, however there are various barriers that interfere with the ability for many to access these resources. The purpose of this research is to explore the potential support community mental health professionals could provide to students in public schools who have experienced trauma. With the growth of state-funded resources being offered to the public school sector to support the mental well-being of students, this is an opportune time to explore the possibility of building a bridge to incorporate a greater level of support within our schools to students who have experienced trauma.

Martin, LeRai

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Exploring Nursing Faculty's Continued Use of Emerging Technologies for Teaching Beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic”

This study seeks to explore nursing faculty's continued use of online and emergent technology beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. This research will add to the body of knowledge on nursing experiences during COVID-19 and will contribute to the science of nursing education, specifically in the area of faculty's praxis and the use of classroom technology. This study was developed by doctoral student, LeRai Martin, RN, MSN, as an assignment for Cabrini University's EDD 782. Data will be collected by way of interviews conducted this semester. Results will be presented at the Symposium.

Masoodi, Saher

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Alia Sheety

“Experiences and Perceptions of English Language Learners from Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani Backgrounds in U.S. Public Secondary Schools”

Analysis of U.S. census data revealed that over 72% of Asian Indians, 55% of Pakistanis, and over 51% of Bangladeshis have completed college degrees (Rasool & Zhang, 2020). Despite the educational achievement of many South Asian Americans, there are still subsets of that population who continue to struggle academically in U.S. secondary schools, especially those who are learning English as a second language. While English Language Learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing student population in U.S. schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022), ELLs also have a higher dropout rate than non-ELLs (Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Marsh, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2022). Secondary ELLs are faced with increased challenges at school such as disengagement, displaced academic settings, communication barriers, and race relations more so than their non-ELL peers (Keiffer & Parker, 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2022; Thakore-Dunlap & Velsor, 2014). Through the lens of Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions theory, a phenomenological study of fifteen high school students and five ELL teachers was conducted via a series of interviews and a focus group to explore the experiences and perceptions of Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani ELL students in a public U.S. secondary school. The researcher explored their experiences and perceptions of learning in a U.S. high school as a South Asian ELL and their preparedness for success in a U.S. high school. Findings of this study conclude that the majority of ELL Indian, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi students in U.S. high schools are not receiving all the supports they need to succeed academically. Findings also conclude that support from home is limited due to language barriers between parents and schools.

McArthur, Crystal

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Round and Round We Go - Elementary Teachers Effectively Using Circles Post Pandemic”

The purpose of this mini research study was to learn more about how elementary teachers are utilizing circle time and morning meeting to build a sense of classroom and school community post covid. Two elementary teachers volunteered to participate in this study. These educators have been implementing circle time in their classrooms and using various strategies to create a positive learning environment as well as creating a sense of community using morning meeting, restorative practices and responsive circles. As many teachers and school professionals are adjusting to the new normal since the pandemic of March 2020, it became critical to take a look at how teachers are building a sense of classroom and school community post covid. In this qualitative research study, I will be exploring the use of morning meetings, responsive classroom and restorative classroom techniques, creating that bond with students will be important as we are asking them to try new or difficult tasks in the classroom. This study is important as many students are heading back into the classroom and teachers are finding ways to reconnect and create a purposeful learning community by meeting the needs of their students. Many of our students' social skills have changed drastically due to virtual school and quarantine. It is my hope that looking at the implementation of these strategies as we have eased back into in person learning teachers are able to build up that sense of connectedness.

McPeak, Megan

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Behavior Management with Pre-K and Early Elementary Students”

In all schools, managing classrooms with a large number and variety of children can be challenging at any age, especially with younger groups who are also learning to navigate their own world and emotions more and more every day. This study, Behavior Management with PreK and Early Elementary Students, takes a deeper look at a variety of management techniques used by different teachers in order to continue their classroom lessons when children are displaying challenging or disruptive behaviors. Different strategies are implemented for both similar and different outcomes, changing with all individuals. Along with teachers, support staff provide input on techniques and experiences that lead them to assist and find purpose within behaviors shown by children in grades Preschool (3yrs old)- 2nd Grade. As children need guidance to develop skills of comfort and balance, adults that work together to provide insight, skills, and lessons for different needs and challenges that are faced daily. Adults all around schools offer different strategies and techniques to children both showing behaviors as well as those who are in classrooms with them, while helping the other adults to manage and balance their day to ensure that children are safe, comfortable, accepted, seen, and learning throughout the school day and beyond.

Miller, Jacqueline

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Y. Szpara

“Supporting All Students Through an Equity Lens: Impact of Direct Instruction on Learning and Behavior”

Public school districts are challenged to establish equitable academic and social-emotional learning experiences for all students. Bias and discrimination around race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, individual learning needs, socioeconomic factors and other identified specific factors adversely affect students’ achievement and mental health. Teachers from the school district cited in this research partnered with administration, students, families and community members to identify and remove instructional barriers and promote a safe space for ALL to thrive socially, academically and emotionally. Teachers are committed to supporting ALL students to be inclusive, empathetic, resilient and collaborative community members. This qualitative phenomenological study investigated elementary teacher perceptions regarding how direct instruction impacts the four themes: being inclusive, empathetic, resilient and collaborative impact student learning and behavior. Direct instruction refers to instructional approaches that are structured, sequenced, and led by teachers - teachers are directing the instructional process, or instruction is being directed at students. The themes were defined as follows: Being Inclusive (including all parties or groups involved in something), Being Empathetic (the ability to understand and share the feelings of another), Being Resilient (the ability to recover quickly from difficulties –GRIT) and Being Collaborative (understanding the importance of working together). The four themes are taught to ALL kindergarten through fifth-grade students via monthly lessons. The lessons are built, differentiated by developmental levels and shared with all staff with an expected completion date for the purpose of fidelity. There is little research regarding the impact of direct instruction on learning and behaviors at the elementary level. The teachers participating in the study participated on a volunteer basis. A Google form survey was sent to each grade level team; the selected participants were the first teachers to respond. The teachers represented an upper–middle class, suburban Pennsylvania school district. Focused monthly instruction began in September 2021, and seven teachers participated in this study. Generally, the findings demonstrated positive results; however, unconscious biases were identified, and more research is recommended to understand the impact of equity instruction on learning and behavior. The research conducted in this study is consistent with Cabrini’s mission of education of the heart and dedication to academic excellence, leadership development and a commitment to social justice.

Milliken, Susan

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“Teaching New Subjects as a Social Studies Teacher: A Reflective Review”

The purpose of the project is to attempt to better understand the demands and challenges of teaching new subjects or courses within the discipline of social studies; this project will consider the wide variety of subjects housed within the discipline itself as well as the sensitive nature of the wide-ranging history subjects offered by a high school social studies department and how it can make the task of teaching a new course all the more daunting. The project will provide insights into the following questions: How do social studies teachers transition from one subject to another within the discipline? What does preparation look like and how does the curriculum develop considering the complicated nature of the discipline itself? How does collaboration factor into the transition and preparation? To achieve these aims, the project will both explore existing research and share experiences and reflections from the perspective of the researcher. This project will review and analyze journals and academic articles discussing the complexity of teacher transitions within the social studies discipline. Similarly, the project will examine how the challenging and often politically-charged nature of history courses can further complicate the task at hand for teachers who begin teaching a new (perhaps unfamiliar) subject matter to students. To further the goal of this study, the researcher will also discuss her experience teaching 10th grade United States history for the first time during the 2022-2023 school year (up to and including April of 2023).

Millison, Theresa

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“Teacher Attitudes Regarding Professional Development: Do Attitudes Change Depending on Years of Experience?”

School districts are required to provide opportunities for their teachers to learn new researched based strategies to improve quality of education. This research project focuses on the willingness of teachers to implement techniques learned during their district mandated professional development in their classrooms. The research question was, Does experience impact a middle school teacher’s likelihood of incorporating professional development training in their classroom? Ten middle school teachers completed a survey detailing their feelings, opinions, and experiences with recent professional development in their school. After reviewing the data collected from the survey, interviews were conducted to gain further understanding of the reasons behind the attitudes about professional development. The findings of this research will be available at the Symposium. This research allows schools to look further at how they are presenting professional development and provides them with an opportunity to make this imperative learning time more attractive to the teachers it hopes to educate.

Omosule, Johnson

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Exploring the Perceptions of Stem Faculty Regarding the Needs of Students with Disabilities in Distance Learning”

As the number of STEM programs increases and the number of programs taught through online learning increases (Mohr-Schroeder, 2019), understanding teachers' perceptions regarding students with special needs in STEM and distance learning becomes critical. Prior research has indicated the importance of research on STEM education, with a systematic review of trends in STEM education supporting the importance of further research involving school policy and curriculum (Li et al., 2020). The current study can help understand STEM faculty's preparation to instruct students with disabilities through an online learning curriculum in higher education. The general problem this qualitative case study will address is the experience of STEM faculty receiving preparation for teaching students with disabilities through distance learning. The research question is as follows: How do faculty in STEM fields perceive the distance learning needs of students with disabilities (SWDs) in their higher education courses? Phenomenological interviews will be conducted to explore this question, and results will be available at the Symposium.

Paldino, JoEllen

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Teacher Perceptions of English Language Learners during SEL activities”

With the increase of culturally diverse students and pluralistic populations entering the education system, it has become essential for teachers to understand and practice culturally responsive teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is not only defined as understanding the characteristics and experiences of students but also how students communicate, learn, and build relationships (Gay, 2018). Building relationships through social and emotional teaching is the cornerstone for building community within a school. The relationship between middle school teachers and middle school students classified as English language learners will be discussed in relation to the self-efficacy of teachers regarding culturally relevant instruction during social and emotional advisory lessons. This study hopes to show how the belief systems of teachers and their perceptions of English language learners affect their interest and ability to provide social and emotional attention to ELL students. An additional purpose of this study is to show the perceptions of teachers regarding the needs of English language learners during social and emotional learning activities. The study also hopes to gain an understanding of the general education middle school teacher's efficacy regarding their responsibility to address the social and emotional needs of linguistically diverse students. The connection between a teacher's efficacy in understanding the social and emotional needs of English language learners and classroom practices will be reviewed to understand how teacher perceptions influence teacher behavior and in turn affect the progress of students.

Pando, Lizanne

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Alia Sheety

“Supports for Higher Education Students with Down Syndrome”

The inclusion of students with Down Syndrome in public school did not come about in the United States until the mid-1970s, when parents and professionals advocated for a disabled child's right to attend school with their typically-abled peers (Grigal et al., 2018). This inclusive practice and several legislative actions are what are influencing the formation of Inclusive Postsecondary Education programs in Higher Education Institutions and increasing the number of students with Down syndrome that are attending college over the past few decades. Presently, 5% or 310 out of 5300 Institutions of Higher Education in the U.S. admit students with disabilities, including those with Down syndrome (ThinkCollege.net, n.d.). This study asks what supports students in higher education with Down syndrome to reach their Person-Centered Planning goals set upon entering higher education for their academics, social, and independent living goals. How might this system be improved to include more students with Down syndrome? This qualitative case study explores one Inclusive Postsecondary Education model currently in place. This research uses a theoretical lens of Presumed Competence and a conceptional theory of Universal Design for Learning. Interviews, a survey, and a focus group were used to collect insights from those participating at one institution of higher education that supports the higher education of learners with Down syndrome.

Pezzano, Christopher

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“The Teachers’ Role in PBL”

The purpose of this study is to examine the teachers’ role in Project-Based Learning (PBL). It looks at what teachers who are currently using PBL in the classroom are doing, how administrators view PBL, and what current education majors have learned about PBL in their studies. The paper will briefly discuss PBL, what it is, and how it works. The case study focuses on four teachers who use PBL regularly. We have done pre/post-lesson discussions including talking points of grouping, objectives, resources, rubrics, timekeeping, key questions, and building on prior knowledge. Research shows that these talking points lead to teacher success in PBL. Administrative viewpoints were found through surveys. All participating teachers and administrators work in the same, well-resourced, secondary school. Further research will be needed to gain the student perspective on what they feel the teachers’ role in PBL should be. Some cultural differences may apply throughout the paper.

Piro, Alexa

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“Is Classwide Peer Tutoring Effective for Increasing Below Grade Level Students' Fluency and Literacy Skills in the Inclusion Classroom?”

This research study examined the effectiveness of peer tutoring in the Inclusion classroom on below grade level students' fluency and literacy skills. In schools across the United States, students with and without learning disabilities are learning together in General Education classrooms. As many of our nation's students are reading below grade-level, teachers need additional strategies to overcome students' reading deficits. One strategy is Classwide Peer Tutoring. This study involved eight fifth grade students, four of whom are Inclusion students reading below grade level, and four of whom are students reading on-grade level. The four below grade-level students were assessed with a Fountas and Pinnell first grade leveled text to provide the researcher with baseline data. These students were also initially assessed with a First Grade High Frequency word list and a Letter Sound Blend/Digraph list. For 4 weeks of data, the four below grade-level students were paired with one of their on-grade level peers to partner read, review vowel, high-frequency word, and letter sound flashcards, and play word and sound review games for 10-15 minutes a day. The below grade-level students were assessed at the end of each week on the same High-Frequency word and Blend/Digraph list as initially conducted. At the end of the study, students were assessed on the same Fountas and Pinnell leveled text. The results were analyzed quantitatively to measure student growth in their fluency and literacy skills from the beginning to the end of the study. Results will be available at the Symposium.

Porco, Noelle

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Student Perception of the Arts Education Program in a Lower-Socioeconomic School”

The purpose of the proposed study is to explore the research question, what are students' perceptions of art education in under-resourced schools? To enable a more comprehensive understanding of art education in under-resourced schools, the following secondary research question was developed: What psychological and academic effects does art have on students in under-resourced schools? There has been a long history of discussion about how the arts are important for development and if the arts should be available to students across all socioeconomic settings. In addition, there is a plethora of literature that offers arguments for the importance of arts education for cognitive benefits and social emotional benefits (Efland, 2002; Hamblen, 1993; Kay & Wolf, 2017; Melnick et al., 2011; Nixon, 2016; Rolling Jr., 2013). Even with this knowledge, arts programming has repeatedly been reduced or even cut from public school education. This study will use a qualitative phenomenological approach by interviewing 3-4 participants who attended a school that 50 percent or more of the student body is considered socioeconomically disadvantaged. Results will be available at the Symposium on May 2nd, 2023.

Posner, Saburah

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“The Importance of Mirrors: Understanding the Impact of Out Queer Teachers and Administrators on LGBTQ+ Students”

This qualitative study aims to look at the relationship between out LGBTQ+ teachers and administrators and LGBTQ+ students. The study will focus specifically on LGBTQ+ students' experiences in schools and if access to out LGBTQ+ educators impacted their sense of belonging and self-acceptance. While research showed that students with many supportive staff at their school positively affected LGBTQ students' sense of belonging, safety, and academic performance, there was no specific data collected about the sexual identity of those Supportive staff members. This study seeks to fill in this gap by taking a closer look at LGBTQ+ students' school experiences and their educators' identities. This study will give voice to LGBTQ+ adults and their perspectives on their school experiences as they relate to their identity and access to LGBTQ+ educators. The results of this study would benefit teachers, administrators, and schools at-large as they aim to create nurturing and safe schools, through a lens of social justice, in which all identities are welcome.

Romich, Julia

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Capstone Action Research - Co-Teaching”

The purpose of this research study is to survey regular education teachers and special education teachers to find both benefits and challenges present in co-teaching. It focuses on the ways the push for co-teaching classrooms and inclusion affects regular education teachers and special education teachers in a well-resourced school district. This paper outlines the reasoning the co-teaching model emerged as a result of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), as well as benefits and challenges of co-teaching researchers have found in studies previously completed. The focus of this study is surveying predominantly white, female teachers in a Title 1, majority white student populated school. Using qualitative methods, I surveyed both regular education teachers and special education teachers participating in co-teaching at various grade levels as well as interview anyone who volunteers after taking the survey.

Roth, Ian

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“The Continuing Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Digital Divide in K-12 Education”

This phenomenological study will explore the research question: in what ways has the digital divide in the access and use of educational technology evolved due to the instructional changes which K-12 schools made during the COVID-19 pandemic? This study aims to provide insights on current practices to educational scholars and professionals, and it will strive to fill the gap in digital divide literature on how different school demographic settings are using technology in-person after an instructional period that required a reliance on technology. For this presentation, results will be shared at the Symposium from a pilot test of a survey created in EDD 787.

Roulhac, Cynthia

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Perceptions of Charter School Teachers on The Charter Renewal and Closure Process in Low-Socioeconomic Communities”

Charter school closures are disproportionately impacting low-socioeconomic communities. Although there is growing scholarship focusing on disparities in the charter school closure and renewal processes, the perception of teacher stakeholders is limited. Eliciting information from teacher stakeholders is significant because they may provide ideas on interventions that could lead to prevention of charter school closures. This qualitative research aims to expand on Richards’ et al. (2020) suggestion for future research that explores the psychological effects...of school closure experiences...among teachers, whose professional livelihoods are directly affected (p. 10). In other words, the purpose of this study is to examine the process of charter school renewal and closures in predominantly low-socioeconomic communities from teachers’ perceptions. This is a phenomenon worth exploring because of possible systemic equity issues that may have an effect on the minority teacher labor market and student achievement. The research question this study aims to explore is: How do former and current charter school teachers perceive the charter renewal and closure processes in low-socioeconomic communities? In order to ascertain the unfiltered lived experience of teachers who have experienced or are experiencing the charter school closure process, the researcher will utilize the reflective journaling method to represent the participants lived experiences verbatim. Although, at this time, the results are not yet available, the results will be available at the Symposium.

Sadler, Treena

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“An Examination of the Lived Experiences of Directors of Equity in Suburban PW School Districts”

With the rise of social unrest in our country, a glaring light has been focused on the inequities in education towards children of color. One way that school districts espouse their commitment to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is by developing equity statements, equity plans and equity goals and initiatives. Many however, struggle with the realities of enacting such initiatives, plans and goals. To address this matter, many districts have developed a new district level position, Director of Equity. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Chief Directors of Equity in K-12 suburban school districts as they implement diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, plans and goals. The method that will be used for this phenomenological study is qualitative as it allows the researcher to capture the experiences of Directors of Equity from their perspective and allowed for better analysis of their successes and challenges. The data will be elicited through personal interviews. The literature review focuses on the history of race and education, the achievement gap, disproportionality in special education and discipline as well as the emergence of Chief Diversity Officers in higher education which is similar to the role of Director of Equity in the school district setting. This study aims to fill a gap in the literature as this role has been researched in business and higher education but not at the public suburban school district level. In this research study, the researcher will interview school district level Directors of Equity to gain an understanding of their roles and responsibilities as well as the initiatives implemented that will impact student achievement, disproportionality in discipline and special education.

Samuel, Tamera

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“Covid 19 Effect on Traditional and Non-Traditional Education”

This research question addresses how Covid-19 impacted traditional education and nontraditional education. Many educators can agree that providing children with an effective and individualized education is essential. Covid-19 has seemed to have put a pause on this form of education. It is not a simple task and as a country our students are falling behind. Schools across Pennsylvania and the tristate area (Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey) have been facing negative impacts on student attendance, grade retention, student retention, and graduation rates. I posted an electronic survey via social media to reach community members and invite them to briefly share their opinions on Covid 19’s impact on education. I interviewed a public school administrator to gain the knowledge of traditional schools’ experiences during the pandemic. Lastly, I interviewed an administrator in a Montessori school to understanding how the pandemic effected a nontraditional school. Interviews with administration have not been recorded. Both administrators and community members have consented virtually. In conclusion, all data instruments help to reveal that covid 19 has affected education. The purpose of this research is to compare one school’s experience and efforts during the pandemic to that of another school. My ultimate goal for this project is to build a great resource and space for educators to build collaborative ideas for student success.

Schubert, Shannon

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“The Use of Immediate Feedback on Assessments and its Relation to Anxiety”

I will be sharing already existing data on the use of providing immediate feedback on assessments and how it relates to student anxiety. Students took assessments, one receiving immediate feedback and then the other, having to wait for feedback. There is a survey (Likert-scale) students will take after each assessment, indicating their feelings on having to wait for feedback/their scores or being able to receive it right away. Results show that students experience more anxiety having to wait on feedback, as opposed to receiving immediate feedback.

Senoyuitas, Ann

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Adapting Middle School Math Instruction for English Language Development Students”

Nationally, English Language Development (ELD) students have a lower high school graduation rate than non-ELD students. There are many challenges that ELD students face that impact school success, and an educator's ability to adequately meet their academic needs is one such issue. According to Sampson Collins (2012), a significant area of concern is teachers' understanding of how to best educate ELD students. To understand the needs of math educators with ELD students, this qualitative study examined middle school math teachers' perceptions of ELD adaptations and strategies that teachers use to adapt their curriculum for students who are ELD. Specifically, this research focused on teachers' use of the ELD adaptations provided in curriculum materials and their use of the Sheltered Instruction Operation Protocol (SIOP) model for English Language acquisition to teach their ELD students. The methodology used for this study was phenomenology. Purposeful sampling was employed, and the participant population was middle school teachers with experience teaching ELD students mathematics. The study findings will be available at the Symposium.

Sheppard, Justin

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“Trauma-Informed Practices and Teacher's Attitude Toward Implementation”

The purpose of this study explored and examined the correlation between teachers' attitudes toward trauma-informed practices and how these attitudes impacted the implementation of these practices at the middle school level. Trauma has become an important issue in society because of its impact on a child's sense of worth, safety, forming relationships, and regulating emotions, which can have negative consequences in adulthood. Also, as students returned to school following the pandemic, many students experienced various forms of trauma. School Districts recognized a need to address these concerns by providing professional development to train their staff to identify triggers and respond to trauma in the classroom. The goal of the research study examined the viewpoints of the sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade teachers at Green Acres Middle School to provide insights to make the implementation of mandated professional developments easier. Teachers were given questionnaires to help them identify, describe, examine, and evaluate their beliefs, experiences, and even biases about trauma-informed practices. Based on the data from the questionnaire, recommendations were made to improve educational policy at Green Acres Middle School. While Green Acres Middle School was the location of the educational study, its demographics are similar to many other school districts throughout the country. The findings of the study will be shared at the Symposium.

Soll Rising, Sara

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“High School Seniors Perceptions of Current Math Class Post-Secondary Preparedness”

This mini phenomenological study investigates the perceptions of high school seniors in regards to their current math placement and post-secondary readiness. There is not a whole lot of current research, but in practice there is a gap between what is being taught in the high school math classroom and what students believe they require to be successful in post-secondary life. The mini study was conducted using a researcher developed survey that was given to a limited number of high school seniors to determine their perceptions on their current math placements and their feelings on how prepared they feel for post-secondary life. The survey included demographic questions, Likert scale questions and short answer questions. The results showed three main findings through the limited data collected. All of the findings were interconnected to each other, and students reported that they need more simple math (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) help, the desire to have more than one teacher teaching the same subject, that there is a current challenge in their math classes, and that what they are currently learning has an impact on their post-secondary life.

Stefan, Alexa

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Elementary Principals' Knowledge, Perspectives, and Instructional Leadership Behaviors Related to Early Reading Instruction”

Reading instruction continuously faces a high-stakes battle between supporters of opposing methods for teaching a child to read. Many of the debates center around early reading instruction. Principals play a key role in the reading programs at their schools. Therefore, the purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the knowledge and perceptions of elementary school principals regarding their role in the development, implementation, and continuation of effective early reading instruction. Additionally, the study will examine elementary principals as instructional leaders in literacy. This study is grounded in two theoretical frameworks: Ehri's Phase Theory (1995) and Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) Instructional Leadership Theory. To investigate this impact, fifteen to twenty principals in parochial schools will be sampled through a purposive, criterion-based method. The criteria for this study is that the participants must be principals who oversee reading instruction in grades K-3. Data for this research will be collected through an early literacy knowledge survey, semi-structured one-on-one interviews, and a strong examination of the reading curriculum. A thematic analysis and interpretive phenomenological approach will be used to analyze the data, and the research will be coded and categorized to identify emerging themes. The findings will thoroughly investigate principals' impact on reading instruction and expose the researcher to success stories or barriers to sustaining effective instruction. Results of the pilot study will be available at the Symposium. The insight gained from this research should address the lived experiences of principals who face the tremendous demand to meet literacy acquisition for all students.

Thornton, Tamaqua

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“From the Perspective of Adult Learners on the Autism Spectrum, What Are Available Supports and Challenges in Attending Institutions of Higher Education (IHP)?”

After the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed and signed into law by President George H.W. Bush on July 26, 1990 prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities. This opened the doors for those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to be given equal opportunities to attend a college or university, to attain higher education. The National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2) showed that within 8 years after leaving high school, 39% of autistic students graduated with a postsecondary degree, compared with 41% of students with any condition and 52% of the general population (Theo Bakker, 2022). The study examined the neurodevelopmental impact of ASD on students and the needed supports for those students attending a colleges or universities. Since ASD affects the social communication of individuals, the researcher conducted a study to gather lived stories of the social experiences of students with ASD. Through a narrative methodology, three students provided lived stories of their social experiences at a higher education institution. Students provided stories through interviews and journal writing of their social interactions with instructors, peers, and staff. Students in the study all reported having different experiences with their instructors, peers, and staff. Participants reported being isolated, mocked, and often excluded from on campus events. The benefit of conducting this research is that it gave those with ASD who was used to being marginalized a voice to share their experiences attending these institutions of higher education.

Vizzarri, Gabriella

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“A Study in the Model of the Four-Day School Week Model: How Student Achievement may be Impacted”

As the numerical year continues to grow, so does the number of interventions used to increase student achievement. Schools nationwide have implemented countless policies, routines, and structures to ensure their students receive the best education. However, unlike a computer that can be programmed, the education system is made up of humans who have wants, needs, and outside circumstances that can affect the end goal of student achievement. This study examines student achievement by comparing the five-day and four-day school weeks. This study focuses on the impact of the four-day school week on the performance of students and teachers. The data collected for this research was obtained through predominantly qualitative measures through March and April of 2023. First, teachers working on a five-day school week were interviewed about their students and teacher performance. Next, a teacher working on the four-day model completed a questionnaire about her and her students' performance. Next, another questionnaire was completed by a CEO of a nonprofit company working to make the four-day workweek a standard. Finally, the same questionnaire was completed by a researcher studying the effects of the four-day school week. The responses from these different groups of participants provided much exciting information about this model. The results of this study will be presented at the Arts, Research & Scholarship Symposium.

Wattenmaker, Matthew

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“High School Special Education Teachers’ Feelings of Self Efficacy as Influenced by Co-Teaching Training”

The purpose of this study is to evaluate special education co-teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy in co-taught classes. This research will look at what kind of training teachers had for co-teaching, what kinds of co-teaching methods they use, and how they interact with the core teacher in the co-teaching environment. I am hoping to answer the research question: How does a lack in formalized co-teaching training affect special educators in co-teaching environments? The study population will be 2-3 special education co-teachers chosen from middle and high school placements. The participants must be current teachers that are in co-teaching positions at the time of the interview. Preliminary results will be available at the time of the Symposium.

William, Samina

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Educational Challenges of Immigrant Students in USA Higher Education”

This study explored the experiences of immigrant students as they studied at colleges in Pennsylvania. Although many immigrants are pursuing educational opportunities in colleges, little research is available on their college experiences. This study aimed to extend the limited research on immigrant students by providing valuable information regarding their college experiences. A qualitative study design with a phenomenological approach was employed to examine the lived experiences of two to three students who participated in focus group interviews. The study's findings show that immigrant students face many challenges in the college setting. Challenges include language barriers, financial constraints, family and work obligations, online learning struggles, and culture shock/acclimation. Based on the findings, it is clear that more should be done to ease such obstacles for immigrant students in US colleges.

Williams, Michael E.

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Teacher’s Perceptions: African American Males in Special Education Overrepresented”

The purpose of this study is to shed light upon the overrepresentation of African American young boys in special education. This is done in hopes of addressing these inequities within the education system and to provide a platform for advocacy for these vulnerable children who are deserving of as much of an opportunity for a quality education as does any other children who may differ from them in race or gender. These types of inequities within the education system in America are far too commonplace, and as the opportunity/achievement gaps are so pervasive in this nation and even look to be widening, solutions are sought to eradicate these injustices. The primary question is: How can strategies be implemented that will stop the trend of overrepresentation of African American males in Special Education? One important follow up question is: Would educators be better equipped to support students who are African American males, if those educators were more trauma informed? My study will be conducted via primarily Phenomenologically informed research. The data will be collected through semi-structured interviews. Results will be shared at the Symposium.

Wilson-Albright, Carolyn

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“Trauma-Aware Professional Development and the Impact on Middle School Teachers' Perception of Student Behaviors”

The topic of trauma and the effect it has on an individual has recently been in the forefront of educational research. It is indicated that students who have experienced trauma in their lives will have repercussions that may express themselves in their academic environment behaviorally. The purpose of this project was to investigate the impact participation in trauma-aware professional development has on middle school educators' perception of student behavior. It was important this relationship be studied for the good of all students as well as their teachers. Through survey, interview, and focus group, data points were collected and analyzed. Results will be shared at the Symposium.

Yoder, Elizabeth

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Crystal Anderson

“A Study of Effective Communication Between Teachers as Students Enter the Next Grade Level”

This teacher action research study collected data regarding communication between elementary teachers (K-6) as they pass their students on to the next grade level and receive a new class of students. The research question guiding this qualitative study was as follows: How can teachers effectively communicate with each other as they pass their students on to the next grade level in order to set students up for success from year to year? Furthermore, the data collected during this study sought to discover the types of knowledge teachers need regarding their students to help them succeed in the classroom and what can be done at the school-wide level to support teacher communication across grade levels. Data was collected at Parkwood Elementary School (pseudonym) in early 2023 in the form of teacher surveys sent through Microsoft Forms and in-person interviews of elementary school staff members. The participants included members of the faculty and staff at the elementary school. Data collected from these methods will be used to create possible suggestions for action related to teacher communication across grade levels as students move on to the next grade at the aforementioned elementary school. Results will be available at the Symposium.

Carey, Tom

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Michelle Szpara

“The Effects of Group Work in an Algebra Classroom”

Traditional classrooms of the past have been defined by students sitting at a singular desk working by themselves while the teacher lectures. This is changing in most classrooms, where the teacher is now encouraging group work creating a different type of learning environment. This introduces the specific question, do students that participate in group work in Algebra 1 have better testing results and a better attitude towards math than students who choose to work alone? The students in this classroom go to a large high school of over four thousand students with an urban/suburban geography. The majority of the students are high school freshmen, while there are small number of sophomores. There is strong diversity in the room when it comes to the socioeconomics and racial diversity. This paper will be targeting students in the algebra classroom and surveying how they feel working in groups has affected their attitude towards math class, and if it has helped them gain a better understanding of the topics being taught in that class. The survey will be a Likert-style survey. The students will also have their test scores collected and will be compared with their survey results to see if there is a connection between students who have a positive attitude towards group work and their test results. Other Algebra teachers that have attempted to get their students to collaborate in groups will also be interviewed to see how the group work is being implemented and how it is affecting their students' achievement in math class. This paper will look at what it means to have group work in a math class and how it can positively or negatively affect the students.