Remote Learning in the Time of COVID-19

When the Spring 2020 semester first began in January, no one could have imagined the events that would later transpire. As COVID-19 cases quickly spread across the country and the rest of the world, safety measures began to call for distancing and closures. As many universities began to call for distance learning and eventual closures, Middle Tennessee State University followed suit. After an extended Spring Break in March, university administration announced that students would return home and all classes would move to a remote format for the remainder of the semester.

Students in the Literacy Studies Ph.D. program helped faculty members to move classes to remote, finished coursework for the semester, and continued researching and writing. While this has been a challenging time for the MTSU community and beyond, faculty, staff, and students have continued to support one another as much as possible. All are looking forward to a decline in the spread of COVID-19, and a return to normalcy.

Stay up-to-date with MTSU information about COVID-19 at https://www.mtsu.edu/coronavirus/
The Mid-South Educational Research Association held its annual meeting November 6-8, 2019 in New Orleans, Louisiana. MTSU’s Literacy Studies program was well represented as nine current students, two faculty members, and a host of alumni were in attendance. Three students discussed their research at roundtable talks, and the other six students presented research in progress. Nicole Crouch, Jasmine Jackson, Susan Porter, Molly Risley, Ping Wang, and Bingshi Zhang all received Research-in-Progress awards. Dr. Stacy Fields received the Outstanding Dissertation Award. In addition to the wide range of interesting research presentations, conference attendees were also treated to an inspiring keynote speech from Louisiana public schools’ legend, Merlyna Valentine. She reminded researchers about the importance of perseverance and the powerful impact that their research may have on the future of educational practice and policy.

Upcoming Conference & Proposal Deadlines

- National ESEA Conference will be February 8-11, 2021 in Boston, MA. Proposal deadline: 6/15/20
- Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA) will be October 28-30 in Little Rock, AR. Proposals due: 7/15/20
- American Educational Research Association (AERA) will be April 9-12, 2021 in Orlando, FL. Proposal deadline: 7/22/20
- Association for the Advancement of Educational Research will be November 11-13, 2020 in Sanibel Island, FL. Deadline for submissions: 10/15/20
On February 29, 2020, the Literacy Studies Ph.D. program held its 8th Annual Literacy Research Conference. The conference welcomed Dr. Jeanne Wanzek as the keynote speaker, who is the Curey-Ingram Endowed Chair at Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. She is also a professor in the Department of Special Education, and conducts research on effective reading instruction and intervention for students with reading difficulties and disabilities. Her keynote address focused on making an impact with intensive reading interventions. Thank you to the conference committee members who worked for months leading up to the conference to ensure its success. Over 40 presentations were given, with the majority of these being presentations by current students, faculty, and alumni of the Literacy Studies Ph.D. program. This year’s conference brought in 180 attendees.

Jennifer Meyer was chosen as Teacher of the Year for Middle Tennessee by Tennessee Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TNTESOL) in Gatlinburg, TN, in November 2019.

Nicole Crouch, Jen Grow, and Molly Risley received the Ethel Bowden Stricklin Scholarship and Outstanding Student Award.

Jennifer Meyer was selected to receive the Sawyer-Rudler Research Fellowship in Literacy Scholarship for Fall 2019.

Barbara Adams was appointed the State Of Tennessee Department of Education’s Dyslexia Advisory Council as the speech-language pathology representative, a council that Susan Porter and Erin Alexander also serve on.

Nicole Crouch and Natalie Griffin passed the Reading Specialist Praxis and are now licensed Reading Specialists for the state of Tennessee.

Bingshi Zhang, Gene Cowart, Ife Popoola, Pam Shewalter, and Nicole Crouch participated in the Online Research & Creative Activity Exposition.
Presentations & Publications


Presentations & Publications Continued...


Dissertation Defenses

**Zahya F. Ahmed**
Impact of Gender and Linguistic Background on English Language Arts Test: Differential Item Functioning

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Jwa K. Kim, Chair
Dr. Eric L. Oslund
Dr. Amy M. Elleman
Dr. Ying Jin

**Tess Fotidzis**
Phonology, Prosody, and Reading Skills: A Mismatch Negativity Experiment

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Cyrille L. Magne, Chair
Dr. Amy M. Elleman
Dr. Laura Barquero

**K. Melissa McMahan**
Measurement Validation and Exploratory Research: Measuring Teachers’ Code Knowledge and Its Association with Dyslexia Therapy Clinical Hours and Confidence to Teach Literacy

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Jwa K. Kim, Chair
Dr. Eric L. Oslund
Dr. Ying Jin

Alumni News

Dr. Stacy Fields was awarded the Herbert M. Handley Outstanding Dissertation Award, Mid-South Educational Research Association. (November 7, 2019).

Dr. Zachary Barnes was selected into the 2020-2021 cohort of the National Science Foundation Quantitative Research Methods for the STEM Education Scholars program. He will receive training and mentorship from researchers at the University of Maryland for a year.

Dr. Katie Schrodt, was featured in MTSU Out of the Blue. (Fall 2019)
Check it out here....[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezitu4-UkPs&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ezitu4-UkPs&feature=youtu.be)

From MTSU On the Record: Student-Centeredness by School Librarians with Dr. Karen Reed
[https://youtu.be/2CMKg62Dp6A](https://youtu.be/2CMKg62Dp6A)
Practicum & Preliminary Exams

Practicum Completion

The following students successfully completed their practicum:

Zheng Peng—Spring, 2019
Masoud Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki—Spring, 2019
Jessica Abarquez-New—Summer, 2019
Nicole Crouch—Summer, 2019
Jasmine Jackson—Summer, 2019
Jennifer Meyer—Summer, 2019
Karilena Yount—Summer, 2019
Tamera Hutchings—Fall, 2019
Ping Wang—Fall, 2019
Barbara Adams—Spring, 2020
Shonna Phelps—Spring, 2020

Preliminary Exams

The following students successfully completed their preliminary exams:

Masoud Mahmoodi-Shahrebabaki—Summer, 2019
Natalie Griffin—Spring 2020
Tamera Hutchings—Spring, 2020
Jennifer Meyer—Spring, 2020
Karilena Yount—Spring, 2020

Important Reminders for Students

- Orientation will be August 22, 2020 (Attendance is required).
- Next deadline for the Sawyer-Rudler Research Fellowship Application is August 31, 2020.
- Students who want to complete the preliminary exam must complete the registration from during the first two weeks of the semester.
- When working on residency requirements, remember the residency contract is due before beginning residency.
Dr. Cyrille Magne and Dr. Reyna Gordon (Vanderbilt University Medical Center) won a $1,000,000 National Science Foundation award for a collaborative project that examines the neurobiological and genetic basis of speech rhythm sensitivity and its relationship with reading abilities.