

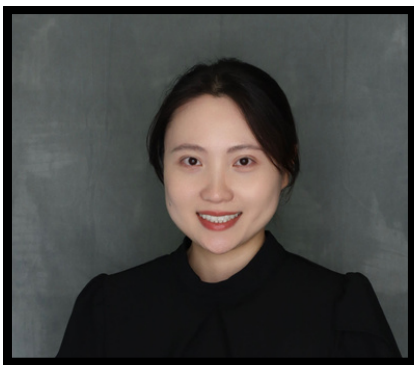
New Cohort Members

We want to extend a warm welcome to our newest cohort of students!
Welcome to the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program Family!

Courtney Pippenger
Shauna Sweeney
April Senkow
Whitney Hodges
Erin Price
Brandi MacDonald
Philip Eller
Amanda Freeman
Sarah Champeau
Robin Miranda



New Faculty Member



Dr. Yucheng Cao is the new Assistant Professor in Literacy Studies at Middle Tennessee State University. Before joining MTSU, she served as a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, contributing to the undergraduate teacher education program. She holds a Ph.D. in Education with a specialization in Language, Literacy, and Technology from the University of California, Irvine, and a master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

(TESOL) from the University of Southern California. Her previous research involves meta-analyses and experimental studies on reading assessments, writing interventions, and longitudinal analyses on the relation of the quality and quantity of literacy instruction to elementary language/literacy development. Currently, she focuses on the reading and writing achievement gap, teacher language use in literacy classes, writing efficacy, and effective instructions to bridge literacy disparities. We are happy to have her with us and can't wait to see how she will bring a positive impact to our program!

Professor Highlights

Dr. Eric Oslund

Dr. Eric Oslund was recently promoted to Full Professor and serves as the Chair of Chairs for MTSU.



Dr. Tim Odegard

Dr. Odegard received the Sally L. Smith Founders Award on April 18, 2024 from the AIM Institute of Learning &



Research: given by the AIM Institute for Learning & Research, honors individuals who have demonstrated exceptional dedication and leadership in the field of education, particularly in supporting students with learning differences. Recipients of this award are recognized for their significant contributions to advancing the understanding of learning disabilities, promoting evidence-based practices in education, and advocating for the needs of students with learning challenges. The award celebrates individuals who have shown exemplary commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students, fostering inclusivity and equity in education, and empowering individuals with learning differences to reach their full potential. Additionally, recipients are often distinguished by their innovation, impact, and lasting contributions to the field of education, making them exemplary role models and inspirations to others in the field. The award serves to recognize and celebrate the outstanding achievements and legacy of individuals who have made a profound impact on the lives of students with learning differences and their families.

His media appearances are as follows:

- Expert guest on the [NPR national broadcast of WBUR Boston's On Point](#).
- His article in [Scientific American](#).
- Hosts a podcast called [Dyslexia Uncovered](#).
- Featured in the cover story of the current issue of the [APA Monitor](#).

Dr. Katie Schrodtt



Dr. Katie Schrodtt has had several media appearances and interviews! See the following links for access to these interviews!

- "The College of Education hosts children's literacy event with local author (February 21, 2024). [Link here](#)
- "MTSU education events spotlight hometown heroes, author meet-and-greet," (October 19, 2023). [Link here](#)
- "College of Education MT Engage Week events feature campus service professionals, local author." (September 22, 2023). [Link here](#)
- "MTSU literacy curriculum earns 'A+' nationally for preparing education students," MTSU News. (June 15, 2023). [Link here](#)
- "MTSU's College of Education 'Optimizes' Math Literacy Teacher Training for MCS Educators," AACTE EdPrep Matters. (May 23, 2023). [Link here](#)

Student Highlights

COMPLETED PRACTICUM!

Summer 2023: Anoulom Phimphivong
Fall 2023: Maria Del Mar Cuadron Roldan
Spring 2024: Katy Kloberdanz & Caitlyn Osborne- Parris
Summer 2024: Tiffany Church & DeAnna Osborne

COMPLETED PRELIM EXAM!

Fall 2023: Tohib Adejumo & Thankful Davis
Spring 2024: Holly Cunningham, Melania Khan & Bill Puckett
Summer 2024: Stephanie Wolfe

OUTSTANDING STUDENTS 2023-2024



Ifeoluwa A. Popoola & Pamela Shewalter

DISSERTATION DEFENSES!

Claudia F. Russell

"The Effects of Critical Feature Handwriting Invention on Early Literacy Skills Acquisition of Pre-K Students"

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Amy M. Elleman, Chair
Dr. Katie M. Schrodt
Dr. Natalie Griffin

Jennifer L. Grow

"Examining the Validity of the Classroom Reading Motivation Measure with Elementary Students Using Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Item Discrimination"

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Amy M. Elleman, Chair
Dr. Ying Jin,
Dr. Eric L. Oslund
Dr. Cyrille L. Magne

Ifeoluwa A. Popoola

"Exploring Emergent Literacy Profiles of Spanish-Speaking Multi-Language Learners: Profiles from a Computer-Adaptive Universal Screener"

Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Timothy N. Odegard, Chair
Dr. Janna B. McClain
Dr. Karen Kehoe

Katy Kloberdanz met all instructor standards and requirements and is now an ALTA (Academic Language Therapy Association) Qualified Instructor (QI). This means she can train individuals to the therapist level and they can be eligible to sit for the ALTA exam to become Certified Academic Language Therapists (CALTs). This supports and elevates the work she completed in her practicum to assist Dr. Odegard in developing the Dyslexia Therapist Training Program that launched Summer 2024.

Scholarships

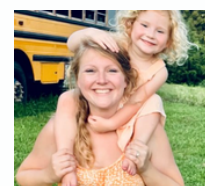
Ethel Bowden Stricklin Scholarship
Recipients-Spring 2024:



Ifeoluwa A. Popoola



Pamela Shewalter



Kristen Sisco

Sawyer-Rudler Research Fellowship in
Literacy Recipient- Spring 2024:



Stephanie Wolfe

Conference Highlights



SSSR- Denmark, 2024

We are proud to announce that a delegation of students and professors from our Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program recently traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark, to present their cutting-edge literacy research at the prestigious Society for the Scientific Study of Reading (SSSR) conference.

UPCOMING CONFERENCE OPTIONS:

(Click the conference links for more information)

[Mid-South Educational Research Association:](#)
November 6-8, 2024, Chattanooga, TN

[Literacy Association of TN :](#)
November 16-18, 2024, Franklin, TN

[Literacy Research Association:](#)
December 4 -7, 2024, Atlanta, GA

[National Elementary and Secondary Education Act:](#)
February 19- 21, 2025, Austin, TX

[MTSU Literacy Research Conference](#)
March 1, 2025, Murfreesboro, TN

[American Association for Applied Linguistics:](#)
March 22-25, 2025, Denver, CO

[American Educational Research Association:](#)
April 23-27, 2025, Denver, CO

SSSR-Australia, 2023

Our team showcased innovative studies on topics ranging from early childhood writing interventions to meta-analysis with multilingual learners and dyslexia debates. The conference provided an invaluable opportunity for our researchers to engage with global experts, share insights, and contribute to the international dialogue on literacy education.



LRA- Atlanta ,2023

Last fall, several of our students and professors traveled to Atlanta for the Literacy Research Association to present. Mar and Bill presented their poster while Caitlyn, DeAnna, Angelica and Tiffany presented under the guidance of Dr. Janna McClain. Dr. McClain, Dr. Schrod, and Dr. Lee also presented at this conference.



Conference Highlights

MTSU LITERACY RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2024



Keynote speaker: ART GRAESSER, Ph.D.

The 11th Annual Literacy Research Conference, hosted by the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program, took place on February 24, 2024. Dr. Art Graesser, emeritus professor in the Department of Psychology, University of Memphis, delivered a keynote address focusing on intelligent tutoring systems and their impact on reading comprehension and learning. The conference featured over 40 research studies spanning the fields of education, psychology, linguistics, and neuroscience. Attended by approximately 110 researchers and practitioners, the event fostered lively discussions on evidence-based literacy practices, comprehension strategies, vocabulary instructions, and diversity in literacy classrooms.



MTSU LITERACY RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2025

March 1, 2025

MTSU College of Education

Murfreesboro, TN

Submission Now Open

Submission deadline: December 2, 2024

Registration open: January 13, 2025

Registration deadline: February 7, 2025



Keynote Speaker: Kristen Wynn
Topic: Building a Solid Literacy Infrastructure
to Improve Outcomes for All Students

LITERACY STUDIES PROGRAM CELBATES 15 years

HONORING DR. DIANE J. SAWYER
FOUNDER OF LITERACY STUDIES
PH.D. PROGRAM

We had an amazing turn out at the 15th year anniversary gathering for the program. We honored Founder Dr. Diane J. Sawyer and fun was had by all! We took many pictures, shared stories of program successes, and celebrated how far our program has come!



Social Outings

The Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program spring social took place at Cedar Glade Brews on March 16 and provided a time to take a break from schoolwork and get to know other members of the Literacy Studies Ph.D. Program. It was a great evening to sit outside and enjoy the patio. The Literacy Studies Ph.D Program students, significant others, and children (two-legged and four-legged) joined in the fun. Stay tuned for more social gatherings scheduled in the future!

To vote on future outings click the link:

[SOCIAL VOTING LINK](#)

Holiday Gathering 2023



New Arrivals in the Program

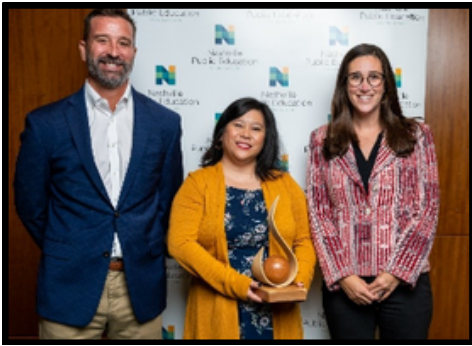
Some of our best memories this year are the arrivals of our new program babies! We are elated to introduce some of the bundles of joy that have come while their parents have been a part of the program!



Program Publications and Presentations

- Barnes, Z. T., Schrodt, K., & Fields, R. S. (2024). Science, literacy, and students with disabilities: What middle school science teachers need to support students with disabilities in their classrooms. *Reading & Writing Quarterly: Overcoming Learning Difficulties*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2023.2299672>
- Barnes, Z. T., Edwards, A. A., Strachota, S., Feng, Y., & Logan, J. (2024). Understanding the relation between socioeconomic status and elementary science achievement: A quantile regression approach. *Infant and Child Development*, Article e2502. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1002/icd.2502>
- Barnes, Z. T., & Cartwright, K. B. (Accepted). Executive function and early literacy: Play-based strategies to promote reading-related skills. *Young Children*
- Barnes, Z. T., & Cartwright, K. B. (Accepted). Strategies to Build the Vocabulary and Background Knowledge of Students with Learning Disabilities. *Intervention in School and Clinic*
- Cao, Y., & Kim, Y.-S. G. (2024). Longitudinal relations between literacy instruction and early reading achievement: Findings from classroom observations in grades 1–3. *Reading and Writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-024-10556-1>
- Cao, Y., Grace Kim, Y.-S., & Cho, M. (2023). Are observed classroom practices related to student language/literacy achievement? *Review of Educational Research*, 93(5), 679–717. <https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543221130687>
- Davis, T. D., Schrodt, K., & Lee, S. (2024). An Exploration of the Impact of Quality Illustrations in Children’s Picture Books on Preschool Student Narrative Ability. *Reading Psychology*, 45(7), 639–661. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2024.2351480>
- Graham, S., Cao, Y., Kim, Y.-S. G., Lee, W., Tate, T., Collins, P., Cho, M., Moon, Y., Chung, H. Q., & Olson, C. B. (2024). Effective writing instruction for students in grades 6 to 12: a best evidence meta-analysis. *Reading and Writing*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-024-10539-2>
- Graham, S., Kim, Y.-S., Cao, Y., Lee, J. w., Tate, T., Collins, P., Cho, M., Moon, Y., Chung, H. Q., & Olson, C. B. (2023). A meta-analysis of writing treatments for students in grades 6–12. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 115(7), 1004–1027. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000819>
- Hebert, H.S., Nourse, K.V., and Krahenbuhl, K.S. (2023). A two-phase study examining graduate library student knowledge gains and perceptions of information literacy modules. *Journal of Graduate Librarianship*, 1(1), <https://dc.etsu.edu/jgl/vol1/iss1/3/>
- McClain, J., & Schrodt, K. (2023). Service, suffering, and silence: a duoethnographic exploration of the evangelical roots of gender hierarchies in American elementary schools. *Gender and Education*, 36(2), 119–134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2023.2289954>
- Ray, A. B., Torres, C., & Cao, Y. (2023). Improving Informative Writing in Inclusive and Linguistically-Diverse Elementary Classes through Self-Regulated Strategy Development. *Exceptionality*, 31(5), 319–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09362835.2023.2174119>
- Risley, M. (2023, July). *Work smarter, not harder: Automation and AI in the classroom*. TETA Summer Institute Teacher Day; Arlington, TN.
- Risley, M., Speed-Johnson, D., & Welch, B. (2023, August). *Success criteria in the classroom*. West Tennessee Title I Schools Conference; Jackson, TN.
- Risley, M. (2023, November). *Success Criteria in the middle and high school classroom*. National Christian Schools Association; Goodlettsville, TN.
- Risley, M. (2024, January). *Best practices in classroom instruction*. Riverside Christian Academy professional development day; Fayetteville, TN.
- Risley, M. (2024, February). *AI is here to stay: The impact of artificial intelligence in the classroom and how educators can use it to improve student writing and reading comprehension*. Middle Tennessee State University LITS Conference; Murfreesboro, TN.
- Schrodt, K., Smith, L., FitzPatrick, E., Liu, J. (2023). Facilitating Critical Discussion of Picturebooks through Socratic Seminars in a Kindergarten Classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 52(7), 1545–1562. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-023-01568-7>
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Program Alumni Accomplishments...



Dr. Jessica Abarquez was presented the Annette Eskind Innovative Teacher Award by the Nashville Public Education Foundation.

Dr. Ife Popoola is now officially a lecturer at MTSU in University Studies

Dr. Leticia Skae has been writing curriculum for Cognia and also works as a lesson editor/contributor for Shakespeare and Social Justice in CA.

Dr. Tim Nelson has achieved tenure and been promoted to Associate Professor of University Studies at MTSU

Dr. Karen Nourse is the principal Investigator for “Analyzing the Migrant Family Experience Using Secondary Datasets” (fully funded). and was awarded \$2500 in January 2024 by the Digital Ethnic Futures Consortium (DEFCon).

After nearly 10 years at Coastal Carolina Community College, Dr. Davonna Thomas is now the Onslow County Coordinator for Pre-Employment Transition Services. He is now working for a private nonprofit organization (Community Workforce Solutions) that delivers Pre-ETS services to high schoolers with disabilities through the US Department of Education's State Vocational Rehabilitation Services (<https://rsa.ed.gov/about/programs/vocational-rehabilitation-state-grants>).

She is still involved in literacy, however he now focusses more on the literacies related to post-secondary options and independent living skills for individuals with disabilities, including everything from financial literacy to

map/transportation literacy and much more! One of the main reasons he was their top candidate was my background in Literacy Studies! FAQ link in case anyone is curious about the Pre-ETS program:

<https://disabilityrightsn.org/resources/pre-employment-transition-services-faq/>



Both retreats
9:00 am -3:00 pm
Lunch provided



The **data retreat (11/2)** offers personalized, one-on-one consultations focused on quantitative analysis for your research projects. Whether you're looking to refine your data analysis techniques, explore statistical methods, or interpret complex results, this retreat provides tailored guidance to support your project's specific needs and objectives.

The **writing retreat (11/9)** provides a set-aside time for students and faculty to work collectively yet independently on any aspect of writing projects in the works. Be on the lookout for more dates this academic year and make plans to join us! Whether working on a manuscript or cleaning up and organizing references and annotations, no project is too small or large.

Join us for our upcoming writing days (Zoom) for your dissertation and prelim work:

- Friday, October 4th (9:00 am- 11:00 am)
- Saturday, October 19th (9:00 am- 11:00 am)
- Friday, October 25th (9:00 am- 11:00 am)
- Saturday, November 2nd (9:00 am- 11:00 am)
- Friday, November 15th (9:00 am- 11:00 am)
- Saturday, November 16th (9:00 am- 11:00 am)
- Friday, December 6th (9:00 am- 11:00 am)

The Literacy Studies Ph.D. program is designed to address one of education's most pressing needs—the shortage of scholars, practitioners, administrators, and policymakers who are equipped to translate literacy-related research to effectively inform educational policy, practice, and professional preparation. Graduates of the program pursue careers as college professors, leaders at the state and district level, literacy consultants, and reading specialists/coaches.



Literacy Studies
Ph.D. Program

Addressing the national literacy crisis—
an interdisciplinary approach

Application Deadlines

- Feb. 1 is the application deadline for priority consideration for fall admission and assistantships.
- June 1 is the final deadline for fall admission and assistantships.

For program details and application information, visit



Up and coming Zoom informational meetings:

- Thursday, November 7, 2024
5:00 – 6:00 p.m. (CST)
- Wednesday, December 18, 2024
5:00 – 6:00 p.m. (CST)
- Saturday, January 4, 2025
10:00 – 11:00 a.m. (CST)

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