



VIRTUAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS

Friday, April 11, 2025

Theme: Current Trends in the Field of Education

Greetings from the School of Education,

It is with great pleasure to share a significant achievement following the tremendous success of the inaugural (2025) Regent University School of Education Virtual Research Symposium, during which we welcomed over 100 participants, including 21 presenters. We want to grow a reputation for scholarly research and academic excellence. Presenters can view their presentation abstract in this proceedings document.

We are excited to inform you that we have scheduled a second Regent University School of Education Virtual Research Symposium for Friday, April 17, 2026. This ongoing commitment further exemplifies Regent University School of Education's leadership in sustainable research and reinforces our dedication to fostering collaboration for continuous improvement in current trends in the field of education.

SYMPOSIUM TEAM

Dr. Glenn Koonce, Co-Chair
Dr. Katie Goldman, Co-Chair
Dr. Brenda Vaughan
Dr. Sonja Maggi
Dr. Mitzi Fehl-Seward

“A **symposium** is an academic meeting where the participants, who are usually experts in their field, come together to discuss trends, present papers, and make recommendations about a specific subject or topic in their area of expertise. Unlike a conference, a symposium typically lasts one day and is attended by fewer people.”

Eventyco. (2025, March 31). *Symposium: Definition, Features, Types, and How to Plan One.*
<https://www.eventyco.com/blog/symposium-definition-features-types-and-how-to-plan-one>

REGENT UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
VIRTUAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM
Theme: Current Trends in the Field of Education

School of Education, Vanguard Focus:

We pledge ourselves to transform education worldwide by promoting biblically compatible, research-based solutions to challenges in education through bridging theory and practice, and by building effective partnerships with schools and their community.

“How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!” – *Proverbs 16:16*

The School of Education Research Symposium is an exciting opportunity for faculty, current students, dissertation candidates, and alumni to participate in research presentations. Scholars and practitioners are invited to attend virtually and present their research, dissertations, papers, conceptual discussions, book or article reviews, etc., or attend for great conversation and networking.

The Regent University School of Education Research Symposium features presentations from faculty, graduate students, and alumni, showcasing their latest research and fostering a culture of scholarly inquiry and engagement. In advancing excellence in investigation, we show how the Regent School of Education research is making a transformative impact on education and society through Christian Leadership to Change the World. Sessions are designed to facilitate faculty in presenting their research and to assist students/alumni in various aspects of graduate studies and career development. Sessions are live-streamed for remote viewing.

SYMPOSIUM STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal 1: Foster a Collaborative and Inclusive Community

- Cultivate a supportive and collegial environment for faculty and students to connect and share expertise on the theme *Current Trends in the Field of Education*, lending to a wide range of topics.
- Promote interdisciplinary collaboration focused on advancing knowledge and wisdom to serve and edify others (*SOE Conceptual Framework*).
- Integrate doctoral students/alumni into the research community to foster mentorship and professional development.
- Center the voices and scholarly experiences of faculty, students, and alumni to enrich our collective quest for continuous improvement (*CAEP National Accreditor*).

Goal 2: Amplify Impact and Drive Innovation

- Enhance the visibility of Regent University faculty, students, and alumni to extend the reach and influence of the School of Education's mission (*Vanguard Focus*).
- Stimulate critical dialogue and knowledge exchange on pressing and current educational challenges impacting education and beyond.
- Build partnerships with K-12 community members and other higher education institutions (*Cohort Focus*).
- Foster a culture of innovation by encouraging the exploration of new ideas and approaches to benefit faculty professional development (*Innovations Steering Committee*).

Goal 3: Biblical Perspective & Faith Integration

- This symposium is designed to enhance Regent University's mission of “Christian Leadership to Change the World.”
- “How much better to get wisdom than gold, to choose understanding rather than silver!” – *Proverbs 16:16*
- “They will soar on the wings of eagles, they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” – *Isaiah 40:31*

Symposium Agenda

Timeline	Topic	Presenter
9:00 - 9:10	Welcome/Prayer	Dean Kreassig
9:15 - 9:35	Opening Speaker	Jakari Taylor
9:40 - 9:55	Measuring Teacher-Student Relationships	Dr. Mervyn Wighting and Dr. Rene Martinez
10:00-10:15	Principles and Practices for Using Generative AI	Dr. Mitzi Fehl-Seward
10:20 - 10:35	A Phenomenological Study of Factors Related to Persistence in Online Doctoral Programs	Dr. Don Finn and Dr. Linda Grooms
10:40 - 10:55	Curiosity and Enthusiasm: Creating Environments for Engaging Learners in the E-Learning Platform	Paul B. Carr
11:00 - 11:15	Collaboration in Implementing Program Transition Points in K-12 Special Education Initial Licensure Programs	Dr. Rachel Copeland and Dr. Sonja Maggi
11:20 - 11:35	Academic Resilience in the Learning Environment: A Presentation of Behavioral Characteristics and Instructional Practices to Promote Learner Resiliency	Dr. Karen Drosinos
11:40 - 11:55	How Student Voice Can Shape School Culture: A Middle School Phenomenological Study	Dr. Stephanie P. Galloway
12:00 - 12:15	The Impact of a Relationship-Based Classroom Management Approach on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Teacher Job Satisfaction for K-3 Public School Educators Post- Pandemic	Dr. Crystal Goins

12:20 - 12:35	Examining Principals' Self-Perceptions of Implementing High School Advisory Programs to Support Social Emotional Learning: A Transcendental Phenomenological Approach	Monica Hines
12:40 - 12:55	The Anxious Generation Goes to College: Strategies to Fostering Effective Student Development Programming for Connected Students	Dr. Dawn Barbee and Dr. Josh Arnold
1:00 - 1:15	The Importance of Mathematics Specialists in Schools to Help Build Teacher Capacity	Dr. Darwin Mills and Dr. Tamara Smith-Moyler
1:20 - 1:35	Navigating Burnout in Academia: Enhancing Faculty and Staff Resilience in Higher Education	Kathleen Khan
1:40 - 1:55	The Effect of Generative Artificial Intelligence Chatbots on High-School Student Engagement: A Mixed Methods Approach	Chelsi V. Kline
2:00 - 2:15	Phonemic Awareness for Early Literacy Success	Elizabeth Landry
2:20 - 2:35	Effects of Burnout and Job Satisfaction on K-12 Public School Educators in Southern Rural Arizona During COVID-19	Dr. LaTonia Bills,
2:40 - 2:55	An Analysis of Components That Affect Job Satisfaction Amongst Teachers at an Association of Christian Schools International Accredited School	Dr. Kim Shakallis
3:00 - 3:15	From VHS to AI: Five Waves That Transformed Higher Education	Dr. Wendy J Smith
3:20 - 3:35	High School Home Visits: Parent-Teacher Relationships and Student Success	Dr. Nathan Soule

3:40 - 3:55	Teacher's Attitudes and Self-Efficacy Toward Inclusive Education Based on Teacher Education Program and Years of Teaching Experience.	Jeanice B. Stewart-Piper
4:00 - 4:15	Optimizing Learning: Rethinking the Current Educational Paradigm	Theresa Willen
4:20 - 4:35	The Effect of An Education Leadership Program as Measured by Test Scores, Assessments, and Grade Point Average	Dr. Glenn Koonce, Dr. Katie Goldman, and Dr. Ashley Rombs
4:40 - 5:00	Closing	Aimee Rogstad Guidera Virginia Secretary of Education

Plenary Speaker

Dr. Jahkari “JT” Taylor

Dr. Jahkari Taylor delivered a keynote titled “Teaching with a Purpose.” He reminded educators that teaching is a divine tool of empowerment, pointing them to Exodus 4:10—Moses’ honest confession of insecurity—and to God’s response in Exodus 4:12—the first biblical use of the word “*teach*,” rooted in God’s equipping the unconfident. Just as Moses wrestled with doubt, teachers will always encounter students facing their own limitations and impostor syndrome. In those moments, educators are called to teach in a way that strengthens confidence, agency, and purpose. When we teach with intention, we help young people step boldly into the futures God has prepared for them. Dr. Taylor noted that he believes this is the assignment of all educators: teach with a purpose and empower students.

- Dr. Jahkari “JT” Taylor, President and CEO of Purpose Pushers LLC, Regent Alum, Class of 2022

Measuring Teacher-Student Relationships

Mervyn Wighting, Ph.D. & Rene Martinez, Ph.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

Professional relationships between teachers and students play a crucial role in fostering meaningful learning. This presentation will share findings from a four-year research initiative investigating and measuring these relationships using standardized instruments. While most teachers believe they have strong connections with their students, subjective perceptions alone are insufficient; objective measurement is required. The study includes both experienced educators and first-year teachers, examining the impact of interventions such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) on relationship quality. The presentation will discuss key findings, provide examples of assessment instruments, and reference multiple peer-reviewed publications resulting from this research. Attendees will gain insights into effective strategies for strengthening teacher-student relationships and enhancing classroom dynamics.

Keywords: Teachers, students, relationships, PBIS, strategies

Principles and Practices for Using Generative AI

Mitzi Fehl-Seward, Ph.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

As generative AI technologies continue to evolve and become increasingly integrated into research, education, and creative domains, establishing a structured framework for responsible and effective use is essential. This session explores both practical methodologies and foundational principles that should guide the deployment of generative AI, ensuring its alignment with ethical standards, human oversight, and education-specific requirements. The session will begin by examining key principles for using generative AI responsibly and efficiently, emphasizing truthful, respectful, protective, and transparent behaviors. These principles serve as the foundation for ethical AI use, helping educators and researchers navigate concerns around bias, misinformation, and data privacy. Building upon these principles, a new cyclical model will be introduced that promotes eight critical practices needed for the adoption and responsible implementation of generative AI. This model provides a structured approach for integrating AI into educational settings, guiding users through a process of thoughtful and purposeful examination, experimentation, and refinement. Educators can leverage generative AI technologies in a variety of ways to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative tasks. AI-driven tools can assist with developing dynamic and engaging lesson plans, automating repetitive administrative work, personalizing learning experiences, and improving feedback mechanisms. Additionally, AI can support research efforts by summarizing large bodies of literature, identifying patterns in data, and facilitating knowledge discovery. Attendees will leave with actionable insights that can be immediately applied to their AI-driven initiatives. Whether you are a beginner or an experienced user, this session will equip you with the tools to navigate the evolving AI landscape confidently and responsibly.

Keywords: gAI, model, practices, principles, technology

A Phenomenological Study of Factors Related to Persistence in Online Doctoral Programs

Don Finn, Ph.D. & Linda D. Grooms, Ph.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

As early as the fall of 2019, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that 76% of students enrolled in graduate-level courses in the U.S. were 25 years old or older and that 52% of

post-baccalaureate students (1.6 of 3.1 million) took exclusively online courses (NCES, 2022a). With the surge in the popularity of online learning for adults, this study examined doctoral candidates across multiple disciplines who were enrolled in 100% online programs at one of the Regent University doctoral degree granting schools to determine preliminary programmatic and personal factors related to persistence. This phenomenological study also aimed to determine the factors that facilitated learners' transition from andragogy to heutagogy.

Keywords: Student Persistence, Online Doctoral Programs, Online Adult Learners, Heutagogy

Curiosity and Enthusiasm: Creating Environments for Engaging Learners in the E-Learning Platform

Paul B. Carr, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

The constructs of curiosity and enthusiasm will be considered within the contexts of creating learning environments conducive to learner success, agency; and self-efficacy in the e-learning platform. If one considers the e-learning platform as a delivery method for the learning endeavor, varying aspects of autonomous learning may be valuable tools for the learners and the facilitator of learning. It is opined that if the constructs of curiosity and enthusiasm are exhibited by the Professor in On-Line courses through virtual avenues, the learners may replicate this infectious exhibition in their behavioral repertoire. These constructs will be examined from the perspectives of creating environments of learning that are conducive to learner success as well as promulgating gratifying course experiences. A discussion related to the individual and collective constructs of curiosity, resourcefulness, enthusiasm for learning; and the creation of supportive learning environments will be presented from a Christ-Centered posture.

Keywords: curiosity, resourcefulness, enthusiasm, learning environments

Collaboration in Implementing Program Transition Points in K-12 Special Education Initial Licensure Programs

Rachel Copeland, Ed.D. and Sonja Maggi, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of collaboration in K-12 Special Education Initial Licensure Programs, with a specific focus on the implementation of Program Transition Points to enhance teacher preparation and ensure successful student outcomes. The Council for the Accreditation for Teacher Preparation (CAEP) requires accredited Initial Licensure Programs to align program components with state and national standards. Through the implementation of these standards, evaluations at various phases of the program are utilized for monitoring the learning outcomes of program completers. The research emphasizes the importance of feedback from key educational stakeholders—including university supervisors, cooperating teachers, school administrators, and alumni employers, as well as program alumni. A systematic collection of data during program transition points leading to internship completion is utilized to track program outcomes. The study highlights how the effectiveness and use of Program Transition Points can be assessed through a newly developed Program Transition Point Success Plan. Additionally, the study explores how the use of assessments informs the design of professional development strategies for educators both during and after program completion. The findings indicate that incorporating stakeholder collaboration and feedback significantly benefits efforts to ensure program quality, leading to better-prepared educators and more successful student outcomes. In addition to these findings, a discussion on Program Transition Point Success Plan implementation, Special Education Initial Licensure Program Outreach Surveys, and Program Evaluation Content Analysis for Specific areas of improvement are addressed.

Keywords: Council for the Accreditation for Teacher Preparation (CAEP), educator preparation programs (EPP), initial licensure, program transition points, stakeholders

Academic Resilience in the Learning Environment: A Presentation of Behavioral Characteristics and Instructional Practices to Promote Learner Resiliency

Dr. Karen Drosinos, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

Academic resilience occurs commonly as a natural process within the learning environment when internal and external stimuli are presented consistently to the learner. However, the construct of academic resilience may be challenged as a malleable practice by educational practitioners that do not recognize their role in creating purposeful and meaningful experiences to learners which may enhance their ability to exercise academic buoyancy during productive learning struggles. An examination of teacher observations and instructional actions used to promote academic resilience in the classroom will be presented, to include: the triad of teacher perceptions of student attitude, student action, and student reaction; teacher intentionality of instructional opportunities for challenging resiliency levels, and the importance of establishing

reciprocal relationships within the learning setting in fostering academic resilience. Conclusionary thoughts will address teacher influence on academic resilience as a learned behavior and purposeful pedagogical adaptations within the learning environment to promote explicit teaching of resiliency strategies to foster student success in learning.

Keywords: academic, resilience, behaviors, learning, environments

How Student Voice Can Shape School Culture: A Middle School Phenomenological Study

Stephanie P. Galloway, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

Public education has evolved throughout the years, whereas traditional school settings focused on students sitting quietly in the classroom waiting for instructions from their teachers who orchestrated the lessons and procedures for running the classroom. Although student voice always existed, it was often overlooked. For the most part, emphasis was placed on a top-down approach where school officials maintained the primary power of making decisions to resolve significant school issues or problems that required immediate attention. As the democratic rights and voices of students became a critical component for developing strategic plans designed to assist students with their academic growth and social development, the approach for addressing the needs of students reverted to a bottom-up approach. Students' voices have become a vital entity whereby school officials have acknowledged the extreme importance of giving students the opportunity to have a voice in making decisions pertaining to school matters of importance and to their academic success. While schools have made strides to promote student voice, resistance to the phenomenon remains a challenge that threatens the heart of school culture. This study explores how student voice can shape school culture through the evolution of theoretical perspectives emphasizing leadership theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

Keywords: student voice, school culture, agency, Ecological System's Theory, leadership theory

The Impact of a Relationship-Based Classroom Management Approach on Teacher Self-Efficacy and Teacher Job Satisfaction For K-3 Public School Educators Post-Pandemic

Crystal Goins, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the impact of a relationship-based classroom management approach on teacher self-efficacy and teacher job satisfaction for K-3 public school educators. The relationship-based classroom management approach revolves around a PART framework. PART stands for prepped and ready, attitude awareness, respectful and responsible, and teamwork (Goins, 2021). These expectations or rules help educators manage their classrooms as a class community. Theoretically, the approach applies social cognitive theory and sociocultural theory to motivate students and teachers to be in a relationship with each other. This collective case study determines if the approach's prosocial focus can impact teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Data were collected through questionnaires, observations, and interviews. The data were analyzed through NVivo software to determine common themes or patterns throughout the cases. The main themes that emerged from the results include high rates of teacher self-efficacy through mastery experiences and social persuasions. In addition, participants noted high rates of teacher job satisfaction due to work fulfillment, shared responsibility, and collectivism. These themes answered the two research questions on teacher efficacy and teacher job satisfaction.

Keywords: relationship-based classroom management, teacher self-efficacy, teacher job satisfaction, social cognitive theory, sociocultural theory

Examining Principals' Self-Perceptions of Implementing High School Advisory Programs to Support Social Emotional Learning: A Transcendental Phenomenological Approach

Monica Hines, Ed. D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

School principals are taxed with implementing programs and initiatives to meet the social emotional needs of students. More schools are incorporating school advisory programs to help meet these needs. Due to a lack of studies on implementing high school advisory programs, this qualitative transcendental, phenomenological study explored the implementation of high school advisory programs and the supporting of social and emotional learning from the perspectives of high school principals. This study answered the following research questions: What are principals' self-perceptions of the lived experience in implementing high school advisory programs? What are principals' self-perceptions in implementing high school advisory programs to support social and emotional learning? A literature review provided a summary of a theoretical rationale of advisory, legislative support, purpose of advisory, models of advisory, advisory studies, benefits to implementation, obstacles to implementation, and planning for implementation. Relating to social and emotional learning, a review of literature also focused on addressing equity, benefits of implementation, obstacles to implementation, and planning for implementation. The research revealed seven major themes from the lived experiences of high school principals' self-perceptions of implementing high school advisory to support social and emotional learning: (a) community buy-in, (b) flexibility, (c) supporting teachers, (d) supporting students, (e) student self-awareness, (f) school-wide implementation, and (g) building relationships. As a result of these findings, implications were discussed, and suggestions for future research were provided.

Keywords: high school advisory, implementing advisory programs, principals' self-perceptions, social emotional learning, SEL advisories

The Anxious Generation Goes to College: Strategies to Curate Effective Student Development Programs

Dawn Barbee, Ed.D. and Joshua Arnold, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

Anxiety among college students is common. Traditionally, the college experience and the journey from late adolescence to adulthood is fraught with anxiety, with students navigating many challenges—separating from families and friends, dealing with roommate challenges, managing greater academic demands, establishing an independent identity, and making a career choice. However, the prevalence of anxiety and depression among college students has continued to rise over the last 15 years (Dutton, 2024), with today's college students dealing with unprecedented levels, leading many to label the current trend a mental health crisis (Kafka, 2024). Studies have revealed a number of contributors, such as deficient sleep (Pelz et al., 2016), loneliness (Richardson et al., 2017), and academics (Newcomb-Anjo, 2016). However, a significant contributor that has been gaining attention is the use of mobile devices and social

media, which Haidt (2024) highlighted in his popular book, *The Anxious Generation*. Studies have found a strong association between screen time and psychological wellbeing (Twenge et al., 2018). Student affairs professionals, who are tasked with curating co-curricular campus programs and experiences that foster student development, have observed the negative effects of mobile devices and social media on students' ability to engage in campus activities designed to foster social development and skills in face-to-face interactions. This presentation outlines the challenges facing student affairs leaders in higher education institutions, discusses relevant literature, and explores best practices for effective student development programs. It will also include a panel of Gen Z students and young student affairs professionals involved in student development programming.

Keywords: higher education, student development, anxiety, student affairs, mental health

The Importance of Mathematics Specialists in Schools to Help Build Teacher Capacity

Darwin Mills, Ed.D. and Tamara Smith-Moyler, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

High-quality mathematics teaching and learning are essential for the success of every student. To promote equitable and effective mathematics instruction, four major organizations—the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators (AMTE), the Association of State Supervisors of Mathematics (ASSM), NCSM: Leadership in Mathematics Education (NCSM), and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)—issued a joint position statement in June 2022 advocating for the employment of Elementary Mathematics Specialists (EMSs) in PK-6 educational settings. When strategically utilized, EMSs can enhance mathematics planning, instruction, learning, and assessment. In Virginia, the Mathematics Specialist endorsement exists for elementary and middle education, underscoring the state's recognition of this specialized role. This presentation will explore the significance of Mathematics Specialists in schools, drawing on research and insights from experienced practitioners. A central focus will be on ensuring that teachers possess both deep mathematical content knowledge and strong pedagogical skills. Additionally, the discussion will examine the optimal role of Mathematics Specialists—whether they should primarily serve as student interventionists/coaches, teacher coaches, or both. John Maxwell's *Law of Explosive Growth* will be applied to analyze the potential impact of utilizing Mathematics Specialists in these different capacities. The presentation will also explore key factors influencing the effectiveness of Mathematics Specialists, including professional development, administrative support, and school culture.

Keywords: mathematics, specialist, instruction, coaching, leadership

Navigating Burnout in Academia: Enhancing Faculty and Staff Resilience in Higher Education

Kathleen Khan

Regent University

ABSTRACT

This study examines burnout among college faculty and staff amid evolving societal and educational shifts. While prior research has explored academic burnout, this study provides a contemporary analysis aligned with recent transformations in higher education. Initially, burnout was viewed as a life management issue (McCall, 2019) but was later redefined as a *syndrome* caused by chronic workplace stress. The World Health Organization (2019) recognized burnout as an occupational phenomenon in the *11th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11)*, emphasizing its global significance. The World Health Organization (2019) defines burnout by three dimensions: energy depletion, increased mental distance from work, and reduced professionalism. Smith et al. (2021) further categorize burnout into physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms, including fatigue, distress, procrastination, and withdrawal. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified burnout by increasing educators' unpreparedness (St. Amour, 2020) and accelerating technology-driven education, straining faculty adaptability (Pesnell, 2020). This study applies Smith et al.'s (2021) framework and the 16-item *Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS)* to assess burnout symptoms among Southern California faculty, focusing on well-being and professional effectiveness (Linzer et al., 2009; Maslach & Leiter, 2016; Mind Garden, n.d.). Higher education has traditionally prioritized student success (McMurtrie, 2022), yet faculty and staff well-being is equally vital. As demographics and practices evolve, institutional changes are necessary (St. Amour, 2020) to sustain success in higher education.

Keywords: burnout, higher education, faculty well-being, Maslach Burnout Inventory, institutional change

The Effect of Generative Artificial Intelligence Chatbots on High-School Student Engagement: A Mixed Methods Approach

Chelsi V. Kline, Ph.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

In 2022, generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) chatbots like ChatGPT were first released to the public and were rapidly embraced by many. Educational stakeholders are divided about whether to incorporate or ban chatbot usage in classrooms. Student engagement, a meta construct comprised of behavioral, cognitive, affective, and social components, is positively linked to academic achievement, student retention, and higher graduation rates, but average student engagement levels have steadily declined by time students are in high school. Self-determination theory proposes that the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, when met, will increase a student's engagement. This explanatory sequential mixed methods study determined the impact of GenAI chatbots on student engagement levels in secondary students with a focus on writing assignments. The quantitative study examined secondary private school students in both control and intervention groups who completed the Writing Engagement Survey in a pretest–posttest design. The survey data were analyzed through univariate analyses of variance, and a qualitative focus group discussed four emerging themes further explaining the quantitative results. Quantitative results showed a statistically significant difference in posttest scores between groups in affective, behavioral, and overall engagement when using GenAI chatbots in writing. While the control group increased in engagement, the intervention group's engagement decreased, showing that chatbot usage lowered student engagement levels. Focus group participants further explained these results by identifying chatbots positively as capable assistants that provide ideas but negatively as inauthentic and individual experiences. Educational stakeholders will gain insight into incorporating chatbots as an educational tool instead of a replacement for teachers or peers in the classroom. Ways to further investigate and improve student engagement levels are also discussed in this study.

Keywords: generative AI chatbots, student engagement, self-determination theory, explanatory sequential mixed methods, artificial intelligence

Phonemic Awareness for Early Literacy Success

Elizabeth Landry, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

Twenty-two years ago, the National Reading Panel (2000) released a research synthesis of effective reading practices for classroom instruction. The first is phonemic awareness. The others are phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. This study examined the connection of assessment for kindergarten through second-grade students in the phonemic awareness tasks of letter sounds, blending, and sound-to-letter. There exists a gap in the literature of connecting

assessments to instructional practices as well as a collaborative school approach in responding to data. In this sequential explanatory mixed-methods study, focus group participants reviewed district data and discussed the potential steps to improve instruction based on their respective roles. The quantitative data were collected from the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screener to determine if a significant difference existed between the subgroups of African American, Hispanic/Latino, SWD, and ELLs in phonemic awareness tasks. Many students in these subgroups have historically struggled in acquiring the early literacy skills needed to become proficient readers by third grade. Quantitative findings demonstrated a steeper decline in phonemic awareness assessments in letter sounds, blending, and sound-to-letter between the school years 2019-2021 due to the global pandemic. Teachers' self-perceptions of their knowledge in phonemic awareness showed average understanding. The qualitative findings revealed the themes of oral language, parental involvement, teacher knowledge, and collaborative data conversations to support practices that promote language and literacy. A key finding is that phonemic awareness instruction should focus on building students' receptive and expressive language with engagement in language experiences throughout the school day.

Keywords: phonemic awareness, multi-tiered systems of support, teacher knowledge, language

Effects Of Burnout and Job Satisfaction On K-12 Public School Educators in Southern Rural Arizona During Covid-19

LaTonia N. Bills, Ph.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

Teacher occupational burnout has been a long-standing problem for K-12 educators. Burnout occurs when staff members become exhausted and cannot complete their work assignments, leading to low morale, depression, and stress. The occupations that have that are most susceptible to burnout are educators, social workers, healthcare workers, and law enforcement officers. In recent years, these occupations have also experienced budget cuts. These vocations are considered the *helping* professions because they improve the lives of individuals, groups, communities, and society. Individuals employed in these occupations exhibit the highest levels of burnout and possible job dissatisfaction because they spend considerable time with the public, which can be stressful and lead to employee retention issues. Various factors contribute to teacher burnout, including overcrowded classrooms, excessive workloads, challenging student behavior, lack of administrative support, and unnecessary student testing. Teachers attribute time constraints, poor administrative relationships, large class sizes, and student misbehavior as contributing factors to burnout and lack of job satisfaction before and during the peak of COVID-19. The pandemic further exacerbated the dilemma of burnout as school districts nationwide tried to solve the crisis and provide quality education to students nationally. The

international health scare created an atmosphere of stress, confusion, and emotional and physical trauma worldwide. Everyone was locked in their homes without the personal interaction needed for humans to thrive. Teachers were required to deliver educational lessons by employing online technology many had never used. Students were thrust into learning in an isolated environment, which created additional stress for all parties. Many teachers resigned when COVID-19 was considered an emergency pandemic, and recovery has been difficult. This quantitative study explores the effects of occupational burnout and job satisfaction for K-12 educators in southern rural Arizona during COVID-19.

An Analysis of Components That Affect Job Satisfaction Amongst Teachers at An Association of Christian Schools International Accredited School

Kim Shakallis, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

Teacher retention rates are currently at an all-time low, posing significant challenges to the stability and effectiveness of educational institutions. This paper aimed to address this pressing issue by identifying methods to enhance teacher job satisfaction specifically within the context of an Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) K-12 Christian school in southeastern Virginia. This quantitative study employed a survey based approach as the primary instrument for data collection. The survey was designed to assess various factors contributing to teacher job satisfaction, including but not limited to compensation, professional development opportunities, administrative support, and school culture. By examining these factors, the study sought to uncover insights into the specific areas where improvements can be made to enhance overall teacher satisfaction and, consequently, retention rates. The findings of this research are intended to inform school administrators and other stakeholders within the ACSI Christian school community about effective strategies for promoting teacher satisfaction and retention. By implementing targeted interventions based on the study's recommendations, schools can foster a more supportive and fulfilling work environment for their educators, ultimately leading to improved educational outcomes for students.

Keywords: teachers, job-satisfaction, retention, education, motivation

From VHS to AI: Five Waves That Transformed Higher Education

Wendy J. Smith, Ed.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

Higher education has always adapted to change, but the past three decades have introduced a rapid shift in how learning is delivered. From VHS tapes and correspondence courses to virtual classrooms and AI-enhanced environments, the evolution has been profound.

This session examines five major phases in the development of online education, drawing from Picciano's (2019) framework, the presenter's doctoral research, and professional experience. These milestones provide essential context for understanding current innovations—particularly the role of artificial intelligence in teaching and learning.

Rather than viewing AI as a disruption, the session explores how it can support faculty, enrich learning experiences, and enhance student engagement. Drawing from her recently published book, *Practical Strategies for Teaching Adult Learners Online*, Dr. Smith offers evidence-based approaches to integrating emerging technologies while preserving academic integrity and human connection.

Designed for faculty, instructional designers, and academic leaders, this session equips participants with strategies for thoughtful course design and leadership in digital learning environments. It blends historical insight with actionable practices that empower educators to navigate change with confidence and clarity.

Whether you remember the VHS era or are exploring ChatGPT for the first time, this session offers timely insight with real-world relevance for today's classroom and tomorrow's innovation.

Keywords: AI in higher education, distance education, online learning, educational technology, professional development

High School Home Visits: Parent–Teacher Relationships and Student Success

Nathan Soule, Ph.D.

Northwest Nazarene University
Regent University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine how home visits conducted by teachers from a diverse, urban high school impacted student success and relationships between parents and teachers. Participants were high school teachers who were invited to conduct home visits for rising ninth graders and the students visited at home. In this mixed methods design, attendance and graduation data were collected for students participating in home visits, surveys were administered to eligible teachers and staff, and semi-structured interviews were subsequently conducted with seven home-visiting teachers. Data over five years reveals the chronic absenteeism rate was lower for students who visited at home (4%) compared to the whole cohort. The graduation rate for students who visited at home at this site was also higher (3.7%) than the rate for the whole graduating class. Surveys and interviews indicate teachers who visited students at home were more likely than non-home-visiting teachers to report positive relationships with and support from parents. Home-visiting teachers also met with parents more in person, and, more than non-home-visiting teachers, they believed parents welcome home visits.

Keywords: parent-teacher home visits, family engagement, academic achievement, attendance, graduation, high school

Teachers' Attitudes and Self-Efficacy Toward Inclusive Education Based on Teacher Education Program and Years of Teaching Experience

Jeanice B. Stewart-Piper, Ph.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

While there is vast research on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education, few studies have targeted the attitudes and self-efficacy toward inclusive education in charter schools in the United States. The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' attitudes and self-efficacy toward inclusive education based on having attended a teacher education program and years of service. This study examined teachers at a charter school in the northeastern region of the United States. The data showed there was not a statistically significant difference between groups on the combined dependent variables. The results from the data suggest participants feel most confident in their ability to motivate students who show low interest in schoolwork regardless of disability status.

Keywords: inclusion, special education, teacher education program, teaching experience, professional development

Optimizing Learning: Rethinking the Current Educational Paradigm

Theresa Willen

Regent University

ABSTRACT

The current model used in government education is failing. We watch as the entire basis of education has been stripped from its Judeo-Christian roots and replaced with secular humanistic thinking which is grounded on the idea that man is just an animal that evolved from goo. This has resulted in a catastrophic crisis of identity in the population and hysteria regarding climate change. Instead of looking to Scripture for understanding, the Church consistently models their educational paradigm after the system of the world. It is crucial for the church to go back to the source and rethink the entire approach. It is our duty as Christian educators to return to well-grounded constructs to learning that reflect not only the psychological, cognitive, and conative precursors, but the spiritual ones as well. This research will challenge the current thinking by presenting insights and Biblical grounds for shifting the entire paradigm. First, education was assigned to the home by God (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). Second, the government has no place in education (Luke 20:25). Third, because it is not feasible for everyone to homeschool, the church must step in to support the family according to Deuteronomy 14:28-29 and I Timothy 5:3-16. Therefore, the system of education must mimic the family.

Keywords: Christian education, learners, teaching, multi-age classroom, trivium

The Effect of An Education Leadership Program as Measured by Test Scores, Assessments, and Grade Point Average

Glenn Koonce, Ed.D., Katie Goldman, Ed.D., and Ashley Rombs, Ph.D.

Regent University

ABSTRACT

How school principals are prepared is important for success. The landscape for program accountability in preK-12 school leadership principal preparation can be daunting for even the most seasoned professor or higher education administrator. The rising demands in today's

accountability-driven environment require individuals to have the knowledge and skills needed to provide evidence that all accrediting agencies and program approval agency standards are met or exceeded and that there is continuous improvement in program outcomes. This presentation contributes to the body of work on principal preparation programs. It replicates previous studies on the program and includes the participation of three of the researchers who have separately worked with this data. It addresses continuous improvement as required by standards from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) comprise the program learning outcomes for addressing CAEP standards and the Virginia Department of Education competencies for the Administration and Supervision endorsement. Continuous improvement is addressed from the framework found in Transformational Leadership Theory. The presenters will discuss quantitative data from student cumulative grade point average (CGPA) scores, School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) scores, Principal Internship Mentor Assessment (PIMA) scores, gender, and ethnicity. Linear regression, correlation, and multivariate analysis of variance were used to assess the data. The study findings were similar to the outcomes of the previous studies by Goldman and Taylor; however, differences will also be discussed. A notable finding was that there were no significant differences between test scores, CGPA, and internship assessment scores for the variable ethnicity.

Keywords: principal, preparation, improvement, success, transformational leadership

Closing Remarks

Aimee Rogstad Guidera
Virginia Secretary of Education

Secretary Aimee Rogstad Guidera serves as Virginia's Secretary of Education, appointed by Governor Glenn Youngkin in December 2021. In this role, she provides leadership and oversight for education across the Commonwealth.

-from early childhood through postsecondary learning.

Throughout her distinguished 35-year career, Secretary Guidera has been a passionate advocate for student success, believing every child deserves access to high-quality education and the resources necessary to thrive. She is nationally recognized for her leadership as the founder and former CEO of the Data Quality Campaign, a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering educators, parents, and policymakers with information to improve student outcomes.

Secretary Guidera is widely regarded as a thought leader in education policy, having been named one of TIME's 12 Education Activists and frequently cited in national media outlets. Beyond her professional accomplishments, she is also a committed parent, classroom

volunteer, and a firm believer in the partnership between parents, teachers, and students to support learning.