

Special Education

U M D



IMPACTFUL RESEARCH AND
TEACHER PREPARATION
PROGRAMS THAT CREATE
OPPORTUNITIES, ADVANCE
EQUITY, AND SHAPE
POLICY FOR YOUTH WITH
DISABILITIES.



COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION



COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION

Dean's Message

The University of Maryland College of Education's special education program brings together faculty with a great depth of expertise in many facets of special education, from policy to early childhood to the development of literacy skills.

Our faculty provide expert testimony in court and legislative hearings on special education issues, weighing in on education in juvenile detention centers and the adequacy of state programs for students with disabilities. We are working to develop and evaluate robust preschool curricula that meet the needs of students with disabilities during the critical early childhood period. Through innovative research, befitting our status as the flagship university in the state and our location just outside of Washington, D.C., our faculty are investigating ways to best support the development of literacy skills in PK 12 students, skills which are critical to academic achievement.

Underscoring this work is the knowledge that supporting the academic and life skills of youth with disabilities benefits individuals, families and the broader society. In 2018, Maryland Governor Hogan and I announced the creation of the Center for Transition and Career Innovation, which will conduct research on how to best prepare high-school-aged youth with disabilities for college and careers—essential work for developing an equitable and inclusive workforce.

From leveraging technology to developing strategic partnerships, COE researchers are advancing knowledge and helping to transform the field of special education.

Jennifer King Rice
DEAN AND PROFESSOR
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

CENTER FOR TRANSITION AND CAREER INNOVATION



Left to right:
CTCI Co-Director Richard Luecking,
Dean Jennifer King Rice,
Maryland Governor Larry Hogan,
Maryland Department of Disabilities
Secretary Carol A. Beatty

At the 28th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan and Dean Rice announced the new Center for Transition and Career Innovation at UMD. Co-directed by COE Researchers Ellen S. Fabian and Richard Luecking, the Center will house existing and new programs that study how to most effectively prepare students with disabilities for college and careers. CTCI is designed to address the barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities.

In one ongoing research study, funded with a \$6.8M grant from Maryland State Department of Education, 400 students with disabilities from eight Maryland counties are either receiving standard

or enhanced career and college planning services to help identify what factors help youth with disabilities successfully transition to higher education and careers. CTCI will foster partnerships amongst the university and government agencies, provide professional development opportunities, and develop a comprehensive transition services database on students with disabilities to advance high quality research and evaluation.

COE OFFERS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD/EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM,



WHICH ENABLES OUR GRADUATES TO TEACH IN CLASSROOMS THAT HAVE CHILDREN WITH AND WITHOUT DISABILITIES. WE ALSO OFFER GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS THAT PREPARE CANDIDATES TO OBTAIN INITIAL CERTIFICATION IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION, AND AN ENDORSEMENT THAT PREPARES THEM TO TEACH YOUTH WHO ARE WORKING ON ALTERNATIVE STANDARDS OR WHO HAVE INTENSIVE ACADEMIC OR BEHAVIORAL NEEDS.

Spotlight on Literacy and Special Education

SUSAN DE LA PAZ

PROFESSOR



Dr. De La Paz identifies and develops writing interventions that benefit adolescents with and without disabilities in secondary science and social studies classrooms. She also conducts research on the use of cognitive apprenticeships with teachers and students to benefit all learners in academically and culturally diverse classrooms.

Her research spans both learning to write and writing to learn—and is driven by the need for effective instructional strategies for teachers to facilitate students’ planning, translating ideas, and revising skills, as well as to support their use of writing to develop understanding in academic subjects. Given the diversity in today’s public school classrooms, a significant percentage of students are at-risk for school failure or limited post-secondary outcomes due to poor literacy skills, underscoring the importance of effective literacy interventions.

Dr. De La Paz leads a \$1.2M training program, funded by the US Office of Special Education Program, which prepares practice-based researchers with expertise in language and literacy to support high-need students with disabilities. She also leads RISE, a \$1.1M project funded by the US Department of Education, in collaboration with Bowie State University. This training program includes a summer research seminar, followed by a two-semester research apprenticeship with UMCP faculty mentors and academic mentoring from BSU faculty.



ANA TABOADA BARBER

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR



Dr. Taboada Barber researches reading comprehension and motivation, focusing mostly on English Learners who are at-risk for reading failure.

Her work examines how cognitive strategies and practices that support student engagement help students comprehend text in content areas such as social studies and science. She is interested in struggling readers’ ability to monitor their own reading comprehension and apply appropriate strategies that help with self-regulated learning.

In the US, beginning in middle childhood, there is a significant literacy achievement gap for students who are English Learners and speak Spanish at home. Her research project on executive functioning skills, engagement and reading comprehension, funded by the Institute of Education Sciences, is exploring whether the difficulties for at-risk readers who are native English speakers follow similar or different patterns as those of Spanish-speaking English Learners.

Dr. Taboada Barber’s work addresses an important knowledge gap in improving English Learners’ literacy development, which is essential for college and career readiness skills.

Spotlight on Literacy and Special Education (cont.)

JADE WEXLER

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR



Dr. Wexler's scholarship focuses on adolescent literacy, researching interventions for individuals who struggle with reading and professional development for their teachers.

Through two research projects, Dr. Wexler examines how to teach teachers to improve literacy instruction to increase students' literacy skills and content knowledge. In PACT Plus, a model demonstration project funded by the US Department of Education, she and fellow researchers are building and evaluating a school-wide literacy model in four local middle schools. Designed to address varying literacy needs of students, the school-wide literacy model includes intensive professional development and individualized coaching that supports teachers in incorporating evidence-based reading intervention strategies.

As principal investigator for the IES-funded Project Content Area Literacy Instruction, Dr. Wexler and her colleagues are developing and evaluating a middle school co-teaching and literacy professional development model designed to improve collaboration between general (content-area) and special education teachers and enhance reading achievement and content-area knowledge of students with disabilities.

KELLI CUMMINGS

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR



Dr. Cummings focuses on improving the measurement technology that teachers and researchers use to assess student growth in language and literacy. She conducts studies to improve the accuracy, consistency, efficiency, and utility of assessment.

Students with or at-risk for disabilities tend to be assessed more frequently and with higher stake results, relative to their peers. Dr. Cummings researches universal screening measures in reading, which are used to assess all students in a school or grade level to determine learning disability risk. She examines the statistical methodology that underlies the selection of cut scores, which are used in screening decisions to determine who is at-risk and who is not, as well as comparing the cut scores for English proficient students and English language learners.

She is also collaborating with St. Mary's County Public Schools, the National Center on Improving Literacy, and Decoding Dyslexia Maryland on the scale-up of a pilot study of universal screening in K-2.

**Technologies to
Help Students
with Autism Learn**

GULNOZA YAKUBOVA

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR



Dr. Yakubova's scholarship focuses on best practices for teaching students with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), as well as the use of single-subject research designs in examining strategies and determining evidence-based strategies for students with ASD.

She examines instructional strategies that integrate technology—particularly video-based instruction and mobile technology that support vocational and math skills—to teach students with ASD the skills they need to have a successful life after school. Her research incorporates the use of technologies while also increasing student participation and skill acquisition in school and community settings, using technology to level the playing field between students with and without disabilities.

Reflecting her focus on the use of innovative technologies to improve teachers' practice and support students' learning, Dr. Yakubova is also exploring how virtual and augmented reality technologies are useful in teaching students with ASD.

JOAN LIEBER

PROFESSOR



Dr. Lieber's expertise is in the area of early childhood special education and her recent work focuses on preschool curriculum development.

One of Dr. Lieber's major projects, supported by funding from NIH and the Institute of Education Sciences, is developing a curriculum to improve academic and developmental outcomes for preschool children at risk for school failure. The Children's School Success (CSS) curriculum is an integrated curriculum that includes activities related to science, math, literacy, and social skills development. CSS was implemented in diverse and inclusive preschool programs in Maryland, West Virginia, Kansas, Indiana, and California; CSS proved successful in improving student outcomes. The latest version of the curriculum, which is being implemented in several states, emphasizes using elements of Universal Design for Learning, curriculum modifications, and embedding children's IEP objectives into classroom activities so that preschool children with disabilities can successfully participate in the activities.



PAULA BECKMAN

PROFESSOR



Dr. Beckman's research examines infancy and early childhood special education, with a focus on children who are at risk for learning problems due to poverty and lack of educational opportunity. As an internationally known expert in early intervention and early childhood special education, Dr. Beckman has published extensively on special education in early childhood.

She works with children, teachers and schools in Central America and provides trainings to improve the quality of education for children in economically impoverished communities. In rural El Salvador, individuals with disabilities often do not attend school or have access to services, which led Dr. Beckman to begin a project called "Comunidades Inclusivas" that promotes their participation in the social and educational life of the community.

She also researches support for families of young children with disabilities, including through strategies for promoting family well-being and developing collaborative partnerships between families and service providers.

EXPLORE OUR RESEARCH AND PROGRAMS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION: education.umd.edu

FRANCEY KOHL
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Severe and multiple disabilities, inclusion of children with severe disabilities into school/community settings, instructional methods, single subject design research.

DEBRA A. NEUBERT
PROFESSOR

Transition services for youth and young adults with disabilities, technology in the classroom/community.

SARAH B. MALLORY
ASSISTANT CLINICAL
PROFESSOR DIRECTOR

Special education teacher preparation programs

TORI PAGE-VOTH
ASSOCIATE CLINICAL
PROFESSOR

Leadership and teacher preparation programs in best practice interventions and instruction; learning disabilities and written expression.

AGNESANNE J.
DANEHEY

ASSISTANT RESEARCH
PROFESSOR

Teacher preparation, person-centered planning, transition programing for youth, supporting persons with challenging behavior issues and severe reputations.

Spotlight on Policy and Special Education

MARGARET J. MCLAUGHLIN

PROFESSOR



Dr. McLaughlin's scholarship focuses on the intersection of special education and general education policies.

She has served as principal investigator on a number of projects that have examined education reforms and students with disabilities. She has published extensively on curriculum access, standards, high stakes assessment and the inclusion of students with disabilities, including coauthoring "Access to the General Education Curriculum."

Dr. McLaughlin has served as a consultant for state, local, national and international organizations and agencies, including the World Bank and USAID. She has served as a special education expert in several state-level court cases on school funding. Among her many leadership positions, she has served as President of the Council of Exceptional Children and on several National Research Council committees, as well as on numerous task forces and advisory groups.

PETER LEONE

PROFESSOR



Dr. Leone researches the intersection of disability and the juvenile justice system.

A former middle school teacher of students with behavioral issues, Dr. Leone works closely with the courts, state agencies, and advocacy groups to evaluate whether educational programs for youth with disabilities in juvenile correctional settings meet legal standards. In states across the nation, he has served as a monitor, special master, and receiver for education programs in juvenile and adult detention centers and prisons. His work to ensure incarcerated youth receive the services to which they are entitled has been cited by the Department of Justice in its guidance letters on education in institutional settings and has proven instrumental in education reform. As an expert witness and media commentator, Dr. Leone leverages his expertise on behalf of a student population that is often overlooked and underserved.

Dr. Leone's research also focuses on the school-to-prison pipeline, examining the disproportionate impact of school disciplinary policies on children of color and children with disabilities, particularly court referrals regarding suspensions.

As a professor, Dr. Leone addresses a wide range of issues related to disability in his i-Series course, *Disability: From Stigma and Sideshow to Main Street* and an undergraduate honors seminar, *From Willowbrook to Attica: Delinquency in the Context of Disability*.

PHILIP J. BURKE

PROFESSOR
DIRECTOR, INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF
EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN AND YOUTH



Dr. Burke's work focuses on major policy issues affecting individuals with disabilities. He has testified before the US Congress House and Senate Committees and serves as the Political Action Liaison for the

Higher Education Consortium in Special Education. He has served as a consultant to the Special Master for the US District Court in Baltimore in the historic *Vaughn G.* litigation, the Joseph P. Kennedy Foundation, the Office for Economic Co-Operation and Development and as a Nominator for the MacArthur Fellows Program.

Since 1992, Dr. Burke has directed graduate M.Ed. and Ed.D. programs in Europe coordinated with the US Defense Department Dependents schools and provided guidance to DOD overseas schools in their special education programs.

Dr. Burke is the director of the Institute for the Study of Exceptional Children and Youth, which is dedicated to fostering research and programmatic excellence in special education. The Institute has generated over 40 million dollars to conduct research, policy analysis, training and program development.
