


*Education Research as a Catalyst for Improving Policy and Practice*
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**Upcoming Events**

The annual conference of the Southwest Educational Research Association (SERA) will be held in San Antonio on February 6-9, 2013. More information can be found on the SERA website (<http://sera-edresearch.org/>).

The annual conference of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) will be held in San Francisco on April 27-May 1, 2013. More information can be found on the AERA website (<http://www.aera.net/>).

**Education Research Center Awarded Grant to Evaluate Large Urban Education Initiative**

The State of Texas Education Research Center (ERC) at Texas A&M University is pleased to announce it has been awarded a grant from United Way of Greater Houston to conduct an evaluation of the agency's urban education initiative. The urban education initiative involves 29 non-profit agency programs that deliver educational services for over 275,000 children and youth from disadvantaged circumstances in the Houston metropolitan area. Hersh Waxman, Beverly Alford, Kayla Rollins, Jackie Stillisano, Yolanda Padrón, and Danielle Brown are Co-PIs of the project.

The Education Initiative is an outgrowth of the efforts of a task force of Houston community leaders recruited by United Way of Greater Houston to identify various means by which the organization could support and impact the work of the city's school districts. Three specific projects are being implemented during the next several years to improve education in Houston: (a) an early reading tutorial program in Grades 1-3, (b) a parent education program to improve parents' engagement with schools, and (c) a collaborative educational program that involves non-profit agencies and local school districts.

"This Education Initiative by United Way will serve as a long-term vision for the agency in its goal to help the Houston metropolitan area become a place where high-quality education and high school graduation are the norm and where resources are available to help all students achieve to their highest ability," said Waxman. "The evaluation will focus on examining the effectiveness of the initiative and identifying promising practices and educational programs."

The ERC research team will implement a mixed-methods approach for both formative and summative purposes. The formative evaluation will assist United Way of Greater Houston in improving its efforts throughout the year. The summative evaluation will examine the effectiveness of educational programs and practices. The ERC will also focus on developing a longitudinal, data-based system that will be used to describe the quality and effectiveness of the educational program on students, teachers, parents, and the community as a whole. Systematic observations, interviews, surveys, focus groups, and quantitative outcome data will be used to examine various program components.

For additional information, please contact Beverly Alford at [alfordb@tamu.edu](mailto:alfordb@tamu.edu) or Kayla Rollins at [kcbrazel@tamu.edu](mailto:kcbrazel@tamu.edu).



Victor Willson poses a question at the March Seminar.

**ERC March Seminar Presented by L. Quentin Dixon**

Dr. L. Quentin Dixon, assistant professor in Teaching, Learning, and Culture, presented *The Effect of Pre-Kindergarten on Hispanic English Language Learners' Reading Achievement* at the March 2012 ERC seminar. Among those attending was Victor Willson, department head for Educational Psychology and co-author of the paper. Dixon's presentation included information on how enrolling in a pre-kindergarten program affects English language learners' 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading achievement. The results from Dixon's study indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between enrolling in



L. Quentin Dixon responds to a question.

pre-kindergarten and 3<sup>rd</sup> grading reading achievement for both immigrant and non-immigrant students. The effect of pre-kindergarten is small; however, it could save schools and the state substantial money through fewer grade retentions and better graduation rates.

**Kalena Cortes Presents at ERC's Final Seminar for 2011-2012**

The ERC presented the final event of its 2011-2012 seminar series on April 23, 2012. Dr. Kalena Cortes (assistant professor in the Bush School of Government and Public Service) presented *Doubling Up: The Long Run Impacts of Remedial Algebra on High School Graduation and College Enrollment*. Cortes's longitudinal study examined a remedial algebra policy implemented by Chicago Public Schools for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in 2003 and 2004. The policy suggested that students scoring below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile on the 8<sup>th</sup> grade math exam should receive two class periods of algebra each day. The findings of the study indicate that the double dose algebra policy raised 9<sup>th</sup> grade math GPA, 10<sup>th</sup> grade math scores, ACT math scores, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates. These results suggest that early intervention may provide the greatest chance of having longer-term effects on students' academic outcomes.



Kalena Cortes presents at the April seminar

### ERC Researchers Present at 2012 AERA Conference

The ERC was well-represented at the 2012 annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, held April 13-17, 2012, in Vancouver, British Columbia. The following presentations were given by ERC researchers:

Brown, D. B., Alford, B. L., Stillisano, J. R., Rollins, K. B., & Waxman, H. C. (2012, April). Evaluating statewide professional development for teacher educators on the implementation of college and career readiness standards. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, BC.

Hill-Jackson, V., Williams, O. M., & James, M. (2012, April). Black teacher educators and White pre-service teachers: Four lessons for effective cross-race mentoring. Paper presented at the international meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Padrón, Y. N., Waxman, H. C., Rollins, K. B., & Alford, B. L. (2012, April). Classroom observations of instruction for second language students. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, BC.

Rollins, K. B., Alford, B. L., Padrón, Y. N., & Waxman, H. C. (2012, April). Classroom observations of instructional practices and technology use in diverse elementary school classrooms. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, BC.

Rollins, K. B., Brown, D. B., Alford, B. L., Waxman, H. C., & Stillisano, J. R. (2012, April). Evaluating the effectiveness of teacher preparation academies focused on mathematics, science, and technology. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, BC.

Taylor, L. L., Baker, B. D., Chamber, J. G., Levin, J. D., & Blankenship, C. (2012, April). Metrics for measuring student poverty and relationships to other measures of student needs and outcomes. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, BC.

Waxman, H. C., Kilinc, E., Evans, R. T., & Houston, W. R. (2012, April). Systematic observations of the availability and use of instructional technology in urban middle school classrooms. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, BC.

Woods, M. N., Waxman, H. C., Alford, B. L., Rollins, D. B., & Stillisano, J. R. (2012, April). Longitudinal effects of statewide professional development: classroom observations of teachers' mathematics instruction and student outcomes. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, BC.



Russell Evans presents at AERA.



Dennie Smith at the University of Nevada

### Dennie Smith Visits Five Universities While on Faculty Leave

Dr. Dennie Smith was awarded a faculty leave during the spring 2012 semester to visit five universities and present the Five Step Decision Making Model to department heads and other academic leaders. In addition, discussions were held about pressing issues at the universities so that case studies could be developed for future trainings on the Five Step Decision Making Model. The universities that Smith visited were University of Florida, Old Dominion University, University of North Carolina, University of Nevada, and University of Memphis.

Through the discussions, Smith noticed themes common to all the sites. Every university was struggling with funding, especially from state sources. Due to this lack of funding, the universities were losing positions or not filling available positions. All of the sites showed an interest in using more technology, with some sites offering incentives for faculty who were willing to use e-learning to teach a course. Another theme was that people are questioning the value of higher education due to the economy and lack of jobs.

The universities are also struggling with the amount of debt students incur while attending. Overall, the insights gained will contribute to future trainings on the decision making process for academic leaders.

### Jacqueline Stillisano Presents for Graduate Student Association

Dr. Jacqueline Stillisano (co-director of the ERC and director of the online EdD program) presented *Show Me the Money: Strategies for Seeking External Funding* to the Teaching, Learning, and Culture Graduate Student Association on March 22, 2012. The presentation included information on writing grants, including the types of funders, where to look for funders, and keys to successful proposals. Additional things to remember when writing a proposal, such as read all the instructions numerous times, write for your reviewers, and proofread the proposal, were also discussed. The presentation provided good information for graduate students preparing their first grant proposals.



Jacqueline Stillisano

### ERC Researchers Publish Articles

Padrón, Y. N., Waxman, H. C., & Brown, A. P. (2011). Differences between resilient and non-resilient English language learners on classroom behaviors, learning environment, and attitudes toward school. *Texas Association for Bilingual Education Journal*, 13(1), 8-25.

Smith, D., McLaughlin, T., & Brown, I. (2012). 3-D computer animation vs. live-action video: Differences in viewers' response to instructional vignettes. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education*, 12(1). Retrieved from: <http://www.citejournal.org/vol12/iss1/general/article1.cfm>