ERC Update

Education Research as a Catalyst for Improving Practice

ERC Awarded Continuation Grant to Evaluate Large Urban Education Initiative

The Texas A&M University Education Research Center (ERC) is pleased to announce it has been awarded a $220,000 grant by United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) to conduct the Year 5 evaluation of the agency’s urban education initiative. This fifth phase of the evaluation will continue to examine UWGH’s urban education initiative, which involves over 40 non-profit agency programs that deliver educational services for more than 300,000 children and youth from disadvantaged circumstances in the Houston metropolitan area. Hersh Waxman, Yolanda Padron, and Kayla Rollins are Co-PIs of the project. Additional ERC researchers involved include Danielle Brown, Jackie Stillisano, and Nancy Weber. CEHD doctoral students Kim Wright, Luxi Feng, Manjari Banerjee, and Brenna Lin are also involved in the project.

The ERC team has been working with the UWGH staff to design and implement the evaluation and report on the success of the UWGH Education Initiative. The ERC has developed data collection instruments (rubrics, surveys, observation protocols, etc.) and has collected context, process, implementation, and outcome data on several of the UWGH’s education programs that are being implemented within local schools: (a) Peer-to-Peer Reading tutoring, (b) Education Collaborative [including summer grants: Summer Learning Loss, School-Based Transitions, Kindergarten Prep Camp, and Summer Book Clubs], (c) United Way Reading Together, (d) Parent Education and Engagement, (e) Math Summer Learning and Engagement and (f) Peer-to-Peer Math tutoring. Additionally, the ERC team will analyze academic achievement and socio-emotional data for students involved in UWGH programs at schools and community agencies involved in the Education Collaborative. This initiative includes data from four large school districts in the Houston area, including Houston ISD, Spring Branch ISD, Aldine ISD, and Alief ISD.

“One of the new aspects of our research this year will be to evaluate the effectiveness of a new project that is focusing on low-performing high schools’ feeder patterns” said Waxman. “Last year, the ERC identified the lowest performing high schools in the Houston metropolitan area, and this year UWGH has initiated a project where they and their education partners will focus on helping elementary and middle school students in the identified high school feeder patterns have smoother transitions into high school. We feel that this data driven systematic approach to school improvement will make a difference in students’ academic success in high school.”

The ERC research team will implement a mixed-methods approach for both formative and summative purposes. The summative evaluation will examine the effectiveness of educational programs and practices. The ERC will continue its work in developing a longitudinal, data-based system to be used to describe the quality and effectiveness of the educational programs for students, teachers, parents, and the community as a whole. Systematic observations, interviews, surveys, teacher checklists, and quantitative outcome data (e.g., student achievement, attendance, discipline, and socio-emotional measures) will be used to examine various program components.

Waxman Receives Distinguished Teaching Award

Hersh Waxman, TLAC professor and ERC director, recently received the Association of Former Students College-level Distinguished Achievement Award for Teaching for the College of Education and Human Development. The award, established in 1955 by the Board of Directors of The Association of Former Students, is designed to honor Texas A&M University faculty members who are outstanding teachers and mentors to students. Recipients of the award are nominated by their students for their commitment to the development of students both as learners and as future professionals.

One of Waxman’s current PhD students, Katie Black, noted that Waxman has inspired her research and teaching. “As a researcher and an educator,” noted Black, “I have been inspired by his passion to engage in research projects that work to find the answers needed to better our public school systems, and to incorporate those findings into my own teaching.”

Waxman will be honored along with other Distinguished Achievement Award Recipients at the CEHD Awards Celebration on October 28.

ERC Research Team

Hersh Waxman
Director

Jacqueline Stillisano
Co-Director

Kayla Rollins
Coordinator of Teacher Education Research

Danielle Bairrington Brown
Assistant Research Scientist

Nancy Weber
Research Associate

Kim Wright
Research Associate

Manjaree Banerjee
Katie Black
Luxi Feng
Brenna Lin
Luke Lyons
Sarah Ray
Bart Taylor
Graduate Researchers

Luchen Jiang
Samantha Shields
Graduate Research Interns

Ethan Vieira
Undergraduate Research Assistant

Program Area Leaders

Yolanda Padron
Educator Preparation

Lori Taylor
School Finance, Resources, & Facilities

Upcoming Events:

2016 Consortium of State Organizations for Texas Teacher Education (CSOTTE) annual conference, October 16-18, 2016, San Marcos, TX

American Evaluation Association (AEA) annual meeting, October 24-29, 2016, Atlanta, GA
Taylor Directs Texas Smart Schools Initiative

Lori Taylor, ERC Program Area Leader in School Finance, Resources, and Facilities, was recently named principal investigator of the Texas Smart Schools Initiative. The goal of the initiative is to “utilize academic, financial, and demographic data to identify school districts and campuses that produce high academic achievement while also maintaining cost-effective operations” (TXSmartSchools.org). Taylor recently testified before the Texas Senate Committee on Education (August 2016) and the Texas Commission on Next Generation Assessments and Accountability (April 2016) regarding the project’s work in identifying Texas schools whose students are achieving at high levels in a cost-effective manner.

Taylor recently published two articles related to Texas education finance:


ERC Welcomes Visiting Scholar Jing Huang

The ERC is pleased to welcome Jing Huang as a visiting scholar for 2016-17. Huang is a lecturer in the College of Foreign Studies at South China Agricultural University in the Peoples Republic of China. She holds an M.A. in TESOL from the School of Education at the University of Leeds in West Yorkshire, England and also holds a B. A. in English Education from School of Foreign Studies of South China Normal University. Huang’s research interests center on the effects of teacher’s motivational strategies on learner motivation. Huang previously conducted both quantitative and qualitative research focused on learner demotivation and learner motivational regulation strategies.

ERC 2016-2017 Interns

Manjari Banerjee is a first year Ph.D. student in the Technology and Teacher Education program area in TLAC. Banerjee received her M. Ed. in education from Texas A&M in 2009. She began her teaching career as a high school math teacher and has also taught at a non-traditional school at the primary level and elementary level. Manjari enjoys spending time with young people, and is very passionate about teaching and learning. Her research interests include technology integration, STEM education, and working with economically disadvantaged children. Her favorite quote is one by Mahatma Gandhi, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.”

Katie Black is second-year Ph.D. student in the Technology and Teacher Education program area in TLAC. She received her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees education from East Carolina University. Black taught 5th grade for 3 years in North Carolina and 3rd grade for 2 years in Bryan, Texas. During this time she also served as a teacher leader in her schools, including mentor teacher, grade chair, and school improvement team president. Black’s research interests include teacher education at the community college level, teacher retention, and effective uses of technology in the classroom. She is currently working on a research project focused on preservice teachers who began their education at a community college.

Brenna Lin is a 2nd year Ph.D. student in the Department of Educational Psychology, majoring in Learning Sciences with a focus on social and emotional learning and emotion regulation. She recently moved to College Station from San Francisco, where she worked in online advertising as a data optimization specialist. She received her B.A. from University of California Irvine in Cognitive Psychology with a minor in education. Lin is a lab member of the Neurobiological Lab for Learning and Development, conducting a study on biofeedback and stress regulation. She is also very involved in the Graduate and Professional Student Council, serving as their Legislative Affairs Chair, focusing on policy issues that concern graduate students on the community, state, and federal level.

Sam Shields is a second year Ph.D. student in the Technology and Teacher Education program area in TLAC. Shields received both her B.S. and M.S. degrees from Texas A&M. She worked as a public school teacher for 9 years, where she taught 4th and 6th grade mathematics as well as 6th grade social studies. Shields worked as an adjunct faculty lecturer in TLAC for 5 years before beginning work on her Ph.D. She is currently working as a graduate assistant in the TAMU Center for Teaching Excellence. Shields’s research interests lie in the area of new teacher retention, retaining students in STEM fields, and building student critical thinking and reflection.

Contact Us:
112 Harrington Tower, College Station, TX 77843-4232
erc.cehd.tamu.edu

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