



Early Childhood Higher Education Faculty Directory

Fall 2025

May 8, 2024

Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted to introduce the Kansas Early Childhood Higher Education Faculty Directory, a comprehensive resource designed to connect students, professionals, and researchers with faculty members specializing in early childhood education across Kansas.

The mission of the Kansas Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Career Pathway is to support the growth and development of ECCE professionals by providing access to valuable resources, fostering collaboration, and promoting advancement and excellence in the field. We believe that this directory will help facilitate connections and promote the exchange of knowledge and expertise among faculty members in the state.

The Kansas Early Childhood Higher Education Faculty Directory serves as a resource where individuals can find information about faculty members specializing in various aspects of early childhood education, including child development, curriculum design, pedagogy, coaching, inclusive practices, and more. By compiling this directory annually, we aim to:

- **Enhance Visibility:** By featuring faculty members at higher education institutions across Kansas, the directory increases visibility for educators and researchers in the ECCE field.
- **Foster Collaboration:** The directory provides opportunities for faculty members to connect, collaborate, and share resources, ultimately strengthening the early childhood community in Kansas.
- **Support Professional Development:** ECCE professionals, students, researchers, and leaders can access the directory to identify experts in specific areas of early childhood education and inclusion for children with delays and disabilities, facilitating opportunities for mentorship, research partnerships, and professional development.
- **Promote Excellence:** By showcasing the expertise and accomplishments of faculty members, the directory promotes excellence and highlights the significant contributions being made in our field.

We invite you to explore the Kansas Early Childhood Higher Education Faculty Directory and take advantage of the wealth of knowledge and expertise it offers. Whether you are student seeking guidance, a professional looking to collaborate, or a researcher seeking expertise, we are confident that you will find this directory to be a valuable resource.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Parks, Ph.D., Associate Director, Career Pathway
Bronwyn Fees, Ph.D., Director, Career Pathway
Patty Peschel, M.S., Director, KCCTO
Sherron Field, B.S., Career Pathway Coordinator

Kansas Institutes of Higher Education Early Childhood Degrees Awarded

Allen County Community College*	Associate Degree - AA; AAS; SAPP - Certificates
Barton County Community College*	Associate Degree - AAS; AS; Certificate
Butler County Community College*	Associate Degree - AAS; CDA; Certificates
Cloud County Community College	Associate Degree - AA; AGS; Certificate
Colby County Community College	Associate Degree - AA
Cowley Community College	Associate Degree - AA; AAS; Certificates
Dodge City Community College	Associate Degree - AAS; Certificate
Emporia State University*	Master of Science - MS Early Childhood Unified [Initial B - K; Advanced B - Grade 3]
Flint Hills Technical College*	Associate Degree - AAS; Certificate
Fort Hays State University*	Bachelor of Science in Education - BS Early Childhood Unified [Initial B - Grade 3]
Garden City Community College*	Certificate
Highland Community College*	Certificate
Hutchinson Community College	Associate Degree - AGS
Independence Community College*	Associate Degree - AAS
Johnson County Community College	Associate Degree - AS
Kansas City Kansas Community College	Associate Degree – AAS, AS
Kansas State University*	Bachelor's Degree - BS; Master's - MS Early Childhood Unified [Initial B - K]
Labelle Community College*	Associate Degree - AS
Newman University*	Bachelor's Degree - BS Early Childhood Unified [Initial B - Grade 3]
Northwest Kansas Technical College	Associate Degree - AAS
Pittsburg State University	Bachelor's Degree - BSE Early Childhood Unified [Initial B - K]
Salina Area Technical College	Associate Degree - AAS; Certificates
University of Kansas	Bachelor's Degree – BSE ECU [Initial B - Grade 3] Master's Degree - MS ECU [Initial B - K] Doctoral Degree - ECU, Special Education Certificate - Interdisciplinary Early Intervention
Washburn University Institute of Technology	Associate Degree - AA
Wichita State University*	Bachelor's Degree - BA Early Childhood Unified [Initial B - Grade 3] Master's Degree - MAT [Initial B - Grade 3] and M.Ed. Early Childhood Unified [Advanced, B- Grade 3]

*Online options available

Barton Community College

KellyAnn Bonnell

Instructor/Coordinator Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
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KellyAnn joined Barton Community College in July 2024. She has a MA in Early Childhood and a BS in Psychology from Northern Arizona University. KellyAnn has over 30 years experience in early childhood and elementary education in Arizona prior to relocating to Kansas. She is a Child Care Health Consultant and a teaching artist.

Teaching Interests:

- Early Childhood Foundations
- Arts Education
- STEAM Integration

Research Interests:

- Adult playful learning
- How young children impact parental learning

Butler County Community College



Cathy Gray

Department Chair, Early Childhood Education
Butler of Andover
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Andover, KS 67002

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I am committed to supporting the educational goals of our Butler students so they can become leaders in early childhood education. For 28 years, I have been fortunate to be a part of the early care and education field, fulfilling various roles (Family Child Care Provider, Pre-K teacher, Kindergarten teacher, Infant-Toddler teacher, and an Assistant Director of a faith-based preschool program). I have been teaching in higher education since 2007, and I'm starting my second year as Department Chair. In all that I do, I want to convey my commitment to learning, supporting the profession, and helping every child have supportive, meaningful early childhood experiences.

Teaching Interests:

- Natural outdoor play environments
- Early learning environments
- Creative experiences for young children

Other Affiliations:

- NAEYC Secretary and Board Member: Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO)
- Member of the Early Childhood Recommendations Panel (2024-current)

Cloud County Community College



Tonja Bisnette

Instructor in Early Childhood Education
Cloud County Community College
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Concordia, KS 66901

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tonja.bisnette@cloud.edu

Tonja Bisnette is the Early Childhood Education Instructor at Cloud County Community College in Concordia, Kansas. Tonja earned a BS in Early Childhood Unified and Master's in Educational Administration from Fort Hays State University. Tonja has gained over 30 years of experience in both public and private education settings, including 7 years as a kindergarten teacher and 4 years as a home visitor and educator with Parents As Teachers. Tonja serves as an In-Person trainer for KCCTO and a private-practice Literacy Intervention Specialist. Profession preparation and ongoing professional development are key objectives for Tonja as she shifts her career focus to coaching, mentoring and inspiring students, caretakers and other ECE professionals to ensure positive outcomes for children.

Teaching Interests:

Human Ecology, Early Childhood focus, Education preparation and foundational early childhood structures as well as Literacy and Language development practices for oral and written language learning.

Research Interests:

Brain development, literacy learning models, dyslexia, and adverse childhood experiences' effect on positive outcomes for children.

Other Affiliations:

- NAEYC Member
- KEEP (Kansas Education Enrichment Program) Approved Provider
- Kansas CTE Instructor (Career and Technical Education)
- Licensed teacher, State of Kansas Birth-3rd Grade, Early Childhood Unified and Pre-k-12 Special Education

Cowley County Community College



Janet Clasen
Director of Early Childhood Education
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Janet Clasen, Director of Early Childhood Education. Growing up in a small town with the dream of becoming a teacher was her plan. Little did she know that 40 years later she would be living that dream, plus some. She started her career as a 2nd Grade Educator in Winfield Kansas before transitioning into Higher Education. Janet has now been the Director of Early Childhood Education for 15 years at Cowley College. This past year, she started a new adventure, training with Frogstreet Curriculum. When she is not teaching, enrolling, building partnerships, mentoring or training, you will find her with her family and dog traveling or at Grand Lake enjoying the sun!

Teaching Interests:

- Early Childhood Education
- Human Growth and Development
- Developmental Psychology

Research Interests:

- Childcare Studies
- Brain Development
- Developmental Patterns
- Twin Development
- Childhood Studies (Boundaries, Behavior, Developmental Delays)

Dodge City Community College

Lorna Ford

Early Childhood Education Coordinator
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I am the Early Childhood Education Coordinator at Dodge City Community College. I have been at DC3 for 25 years. I have also served as the Early Childhood Education Professor and as an Infant-Toddler Specialist with DC3 Child Care Resource and Referral Agency. Prior to DC3, I was the KSU Child Development Center Director for 5 years and the Fort Riley Child Development Center Director/Assistant Director for 4 years. I earned my Masters and Bachelor Degrees in Early Childhood Education at Kansas State University. I earned my AAS in Early Childhood from Cloud County Community College.

Other Affiliations:

- NAEYC Member
- KSAEYC Member

Emporia State University



Sandra Bequette

Assistant Professor, Program Lead MS ECU
Emporia State University
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Sandra Bequette is an assistant professor at Emporia State University. She is the program lead for the M.S. in Early Childhood Unified program. While having served in Higher Education for 10 years, she also brings a wealth of experience having taught in both regular education and special education early childhood classrooms, most recently as a Unified Prekindergarten teacher. Her research interests include early literacy, diversity/multicultural education, and mathematical discourse. Her driving passion is to ensure that young children, with and without exceptionalities are provided access to high-quality inclusive learning environments.

Teaching Interests:

Dr. Bequette has an extensive background in teaching early childhood and elementary methods courses, including Infant/Toddler, Preschool/PreK, and K-3rd Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, PreK-2 Literacy, Characteristics of Inclusive Early Childhood, and Integrating Creative Arts into Inclusive Early Childhood. Additionally, Dr. Bequette is theory driven, having taught Educational Psychology for a number of years. Key strands in her courses include inclusion and anti-bias curriculum.

Research Interests:

Research interests are in the fields of Constructivism, inclusion, diversity/anti-bias education, mathematics, and early literacy instruction. Her dissertation research was a qualitative, teacher research project in which she examined mathematical discourse in her kindergarten students. It won the NAECTE Merrill Pearson Outstanding Dissertation Award.

Flint Hills Technical College



Nancy Robinson

Early Childhood Education Instructor
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Nancy Robinson has worked in early childhood and elementary education for over 30 years, including special education. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary and Early Childhood Education, a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Special Education, and a Master's in the Science of Library and Information Management.

Teaching Interests:

It is my firm belief that education should strive to be creative and interesting to all children- no matter their background or abilities.

Research Interests:

Brain development and creating literacy-based activities that feature all developmental domains.

Fort Hays State University



Laney Roths
Instructor
Fort Hays State University

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Laney Roths is an Instructor in the Department of Teacher Education and program coordinator for the Early Childhood Education program at Fort Hays State University. Before transitioning to Fort Hays State University, Laney worked as an ECSE teacher in both private and public schools. She earned her Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Early Childhood Education from Kansas State University and is working to complete her Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction.

Teaching Interests:

- Child development
- Early Childhood Education
- Foundations of Education
- Clinical supervision of pre-service teachers

Research Interests:

- Teacher identity
- Play-based learning
- Pre-service preparation

Highland Community College



Tammy Biswell
ECH Instructor
HCC Wamego Center
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Instructor, Mrs. Tammy Biswell is a two-time national board-certified CTE teacher of Early Childhood through young adult education. She and her husband Dennis live in the Wamego Community and enjoy the outdoors. Mrs. Biswell's favorite pass times include gardening, growing flowers, and baking. Her prior employment at HCC included teaching FCS at Wamego High School for the past 18 years and owning her own private preschool and childcare home.

Teaching Interests:

Early Childhood Development

Other Affiliations:

Member of KCTE and Kansas FCCLA

Hutchinson Community College



Jennifer Forker

Early Childhood Education Instructor
Hutchinson Community College
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I started my career in early childhood education in a kindergarten room. For 15 years, I taught kindergarten at Yoder Charter School, a mostly Amish community. After obtaining my Master's degree in Educational Leadership, I moved to program coordinator for the ECE program at Hutchinson Community College in 2012. I teach the child development courses solely online on a rotating schedule to allow our students to complete their AGS degrees in 2 years. I enjoy visiting our local high schools and promoting our field to the next generation.

Teaching Interests:

- Preschool aged children
- Importance of play curriculum
- Nature schools

Research Interests:

- Play curriculum
- Nature school

Kansas City Kansas Community College



Annette Farrell

Early Childhood Education and Development
Coordinator

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I am the Early Childhood Education and Development Program Coordinator at Kansas City Kansas Community College. I oversee the program, teach, and advise students. I enjoy the challenge of administering a program. I earned an M.Ed. in Early Childhood Administration from Champlain College and a Bachelor of Business Administration from Texas Christian University.

I have spent thirty years in early childhood education, as a special needs infant teacher, center director, NAEYC accreditation specialist, adjunct faculty, and technical assistance coach at Metropolitan Community College-Penn Valley (MCC). Later, I worked as a Head Start Curriculum and Training Manager.

My role was to support early educators in their business and be an agent of change in their practice. As a bilingual trainer and consultant for various micro-enterprises and community organizations, I traveled and delivered workshops and curriculums nationally and internationally. I enjoy volunteering as a Conscious Discipline Institute helper when possible.

My vision is to support educators to become intentional, reflective thinkers to develop themselves and children to their fullest potential.

Teaching Interests:

I enjoy teaching observation and assessment because it is the foundation of all we do in early childhood education. It is a lifelong skill that must be practiced creating meaningful experiences for individuals and groups of children.

Research Interests:

Adult education, social-emotional development, and trauma.

Other Affiliations:

- Raising WYCO ECED Workforce Group, Kansas City, Kansas
- Kansas City Kansas Community College Learning Spaces Taskforce Group
- Kansas City Kansas Community College Program Review Committee, Secretary
- National Association for the Education of Young Children and Affiliate
- National Association for Family Child Care

Kansas State University



Bronwyn Fees

Professor

Kansas State University
College of Health and Human Sciences
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I am a professor in early childhood education and associate dean for academic affairs in the College of Health and Human Sciences at Kansas State University. Since 1998, I have taught in pre-service teacher education and graduate studies and engaged in research, publishing, and presenting on children's physical activity in the early childhood classrooms. As associate dean, I am responsible for the coordination of academic processes, courses and curriculum within the college including distance programs and coordination/integration with larger academic systems across the university. As part of my role, I also provide leadership for several national organizations.

Prior to K-State I taught in as well as administered programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers in university settings as well as provided direct services to neurodiverse youth and their parents (also neurodiverse) in a home visiting program designed to support basic living skills. I am a board member for and PI at K-State with Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc. (KCCTO) and currently serve as part of the leadership team on the implementation process for the Career Pathway for Kansas Early Care and Education.

Teaching Interests:

- Child development
- Theory development
- Pedagogy

Research Interests:

- Physical activity in early childhood settings
- Approaches to early learning internationally
- Early childhood professional development

Other Affiliations:

- Board member and as Principal Investigator- Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities, Inc. (KCCTO) (2004-present).
- Member of multiple administrative groups at Kansas State University related to data management, enrollment management, policy implementation, course and curriculum, distance education, and budgeting.
- Member and Immediate Past Board Chair, Interactive Distance Education Alliance (IDEA) and liaison for the bachelor's degree completion program in Early Childhood Education in a Mobile Society (ECEMS).
- Secretary, Cabinet, IDEA (2021-2023).
- Director, Board on Health, and Human Sciences – Association of Public and Land Grant Universities
- Past-Chair, Assembly for Higher Education – American Association for Family and Consumer Sciences.
- American Council on Education (ACE) Fellow and Group Leader, Agile Administrator Program.
- Board Member, Kansas Paraguay Partnership (2021 – current)

Kansas State University

**Jennifer Francois**

Professor of Practice
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Dr. Jennifer Francois is a Professor of Practice in the Department of Applied Human Sciences and program chair of the Early Childhood Education program at Kansas State University. For the last 2 years, she worked closely with the Kansas Child Care Training Opportunities (KCCTO) organization helping to support two new initiatives (i.e., developmental inclusion and early childhood mental health) under the KCCTO-KITS Infant Toddler Specialist Network (ITSN) umbrella. Prior to joining the K-State faculty, Dr. Francois spent 9 ½ years working for Rainbows United in Wichita, KS. During her time at Rainbows United, she was their Early Childhood Coordinator and supervised the Community-based Education and Training Services (CBETS). She is currently the state of Kansas Recommended Practices Ambassador for the Division of Early Childhood, Secretary for the Division of Early Childhood executive board, and she is actively involved in local and state level organizations, including the Riley County Inter-Agency Coordinating Council and the Kansas Division for Early Childhood. Her research focuses on pre-service preparation and professional development in early intervention and early childhood special education and language acquisition in children.

Teaching Interests:

- Language development
- Emergent literacy
- Early intervention
- Family professional partnerships

Research Interests:

- Language acquisition
- Pre-service preparation and professional development of early childhood professionals
- Early intervention/special education

Other Affiliations:

- Memberships: Kansas Division for Early Childhood, Division for Early Childhood, International Congress of Infant Studies
- Leadership Roles: Secretary, Division for Early Childhood executive board, Partnership Liaison, Kansas Division for Early Childhood, Co-chair ECU Standards Revisions Team, DEC Recommended Practices Ambassador
- Funded grants: 2023-2024 United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, "Child Care Provider Perception of Child Care Subsidy in Kansas"

Kansas State University



Barbara Hammerli
Instructor
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I have worked in the field of Early Childhood for 44 years specializing in infant-toddler development and programs as a lead teacher and laboratory instructor. Currently, my role is to model, mentor, and evaluate field experiences in preschool and infant-toddler classrooms. I also teach courses in Developmental Curriculum, Reflective Practice-Infants and Toddlers, and Early Childhood Practicum 1: Infants and Toddlers.

Teaching Interests:

- Infant-Toddler (0-3) Programs & Curriculum

Affiliations:

- Kansas Professional Teaching License Early Childhood Education Birth-Kindergarten Unified
- Kansas Association for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

Kansas State University



Misti Johnson-Olthoff (she/her/hers)

Academic Instructor & Advisor
PhD Graduate Student, Prevention Science
Kansas State University
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Misti has experienced a variety of educational settings: Graduate Teacher Assistant in a toddler classroom (KSU), pre-kindergarten at a non-profit Child Development Center (Addison, TX), pre-kindergarten at a private for-profit Early Childhood Center (Plano, TX), and as a kindergarten teacher in a public charter (Dallas, TX), and a Lead Teacher/Supervising Instructor at the Stone House Early Childhood Education Center (toddlers) and is currently an Academic Advisor and Instructor for the College of Health and Human Sciences in the Department of Applied Human Science.

Outside of working directly with young children and college students, she enjoys spending time with her husband, Matt, son, Kipton Lee, and rescue beagles. Other leisure activities include traveling, outdoor activities, yoga, a good book, coffee, and watching college athletics.

Teaching Interests:

- Child development
- Interaction techniques
- Exceptional development
- Early childhood environments
- Clinical supervision of pre-service teachers

Research Interests:

- Early childhood sexual development
- Early childhood sexual: communication, literacy, citizenship
- Pre-service teacher normative early childhood sexual development

Other Affiliations:

- Faculty webpage: <https://www.hhs.k-state.edu/ahs/about/people/mlj6966/>
- KS Professional Teaching License Early Childhood Unified B-K (08.31.2025)
- TX Standard Classroom Teacher Generalist EC-4 (08.31.2026)
- TX English as a Second Language Supplemental EC-4 (08.31.2026)
- National Council for Mental Well-Being - Youth Mental Health & First Aid USA
Alpha Alpha Alpha Honor Society Member – November 2023
- National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Member; April 2023 – present
- Kansas Division for Early Childhood Conference (KDEC) Presenter; February 2020, 2022

Presentations:

- November 2023 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Annual Conference (Nashville, TN) Poster Presentation - Family Voice: The Power of Family!
- February 2022 Kansas Division for Early Childhood Conference – Mental Wellness & Self-Care
- February 2020 Kansas Division for Early Childhood Conference – No Academics to Know Academics: The Power of Play!

Projects & Awards:

- May 2024 Health & Human Sciences Prevention Science Graduate Student Award for Outstanding Teaching
- May 2019 Kansas Local Food & Gardening Grant Recipient; Kansas Team Nutrition; Child Nutrition & Wellness; USDA Grow it, Try it, Like it! Preschool Gardening Curriculum and Kansas Farm Bureau Kailey's Ag Adventures -- \$500
- October 2011-April 2015 DonorsChoose.org is an online charity that is available to all public-school teachers, grades K-12, to post project requests (materials, resources, fieldtrips, guests) online and when a project receives full funding the requested materials are shipped directly to the school -- \$7,766

Newman University



Mallory Arellano

ECU Coordinator
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I am completing my 6th year as faculty at Newman University. I live in Garden City, KS where I started teaching for USD 457 in August 2010. I have taught 5th and 6th grade regular and special education, worked as a behavior consultant, and taught PreK as a special education early childhood teacher with 3 to 5 year-olds. At Newman, I oversee our early childhood unified program and the teacher intern placements. I am an assistant professor and teach all the ECU courses, a lesson planning course, science and math practicum courses, K-TWS course, and field experience.

Teaching Interests:

Early Childhood, Special Education PreK-12, Instructional Planning, science education, math education, behavior management

Research Interests:

Identifying effective interventions and therapies and improving support systems for individuals with ASD and their families, instructional strategies, assistive technology, and inclusive education practices, inclusive early childhood education, and teacher-prep and professional development.

Other Affiliations:

- NAEYC member

Pittsburg State University



Amber Tankersley
Professor & Preschool Lab Director
Pittsburg State University
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I am Amber Tankersley. I have taught early childhood development courses at Pittsburg State University since the fall of 2008. I am also the director of the NAEYC-accredited Little Gorillas Preschool program in the Family & Consumer Sciences building. I have a bachelor's degree in elementary/early childhood education (Missouri Southern State University), a master's degree in elementary education with an emphasis in early childhood (Missouri State University), and a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction with a focus in human environmental science (University of Arkansas). Before coming to Pitt State, I was first a teacher in a preschool (3-5-year-olds) age classroom, then director of the Child Development Center, and finally an adjunct EC instructor, all at Missouri Southern State University. I have worked with young children, families, and college-age students for 30+ years. I also do several presentations and webinars each year related to early childhood curriculum and the importance of play. I am an active NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) member.

Teaching Interests:

- Early childhood curriculum
- Play

Research Interests:

- Supporting beginning teachers

Salina Technical School



Callie Robinson

Early Childhood Education Instructor
Salina Technical School
2562 Centennial Rd.
Salina, KS 67401

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callie.robinson@salinatech.edu

Callie earned her Associate of Applied Science degree in Early Childhood Education from Cloud County Community College.

Mrs. Robinson has 13 years of experience in early childhood education settings. She has worked in the preschool classroom setting as a teacher's assistant for 6 years and then became a lead preschool teacher at Heartland Early Education for 7 years. She joined the Salina Tech Early Childhood Education program as the instructor in 2021.

Teaching Interests:

- Family engagement

University of Kansas



Maria Hugh

Assistant Professor
University of Kansas
KU Department of Special Education
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Dr. Maria Hugh is an Assistant Professor of Special Education at the University of Kansas and Affiliated faculty at the University of Kansas Center for Developmental Disabilities and School Mental Health Assessment Research and Training Center at the University of Washington. An early childhood special educator and board-certified behavior analyst by training, Dr. Hugh focuses on improving outcomes for young children with developmental disabilities by partnering with pre- and in-service educators to teach and learn about feasible and effective practices to use for young children with autism and developmental disabilities in inclusive early learning contexts. Her research aims to 1) identify usable practices that improve learning opportunities, 2) explore individual and organizational implementation mechanisms, and 3) test pre-service and in-service professional development supports that facilitate intervention decision-making and implementation. In pursuit of these aims, Dr. Hugh partners with schools and communities using implementation science and mixed methods approaches.

Teaching Interests:

- Individualized Intervention/Instruction and Supports Methods for Young Children with Developmental Disabilities and Autism
- Implementation Science in Schools
- Mixed Methods Research

Research Interests:

- Pre-Service Preparation
- Tailoring Implementation and Professional
- Development Supports
- Facilitating Educators' Instructional Decision-Making for Students with Developmental Disabilities

Other Affiliations:

See faculty webpage: <https://specialedu.ku.edu/people/maria-hugh>

Current Grant Funding:

Office of Special Education, 325K, Project MounTaiN: Meeting The Need to Prepare Early Interventionists and Special Educators in Data-Based Instruction for Young Children with High- Intensity Support Needs

Office of Special Education Programs, CFDA 84.325D, Preparing Early Childhood Special Education Leaders for Diverse Settings (Project EARLY).

University of Kansas



Kathleen N. Tuck
Associate Professor
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Kathleen N. Tuck, Ph.D., BCBA-D is an associate professor of special education at The University of Kansas. Prior to joining KU, Katie was an educator in the metro Washington, D.C. area supporting young children with language and behavioral support needs in inclusive home, community childcare, and school-based settings. Katie trained as a general and special education teacher at The College of William & Mary and received her Ph.D. in early childhood special education from Vanderbilt University. Educator partnerships drive Katie's research and teaching focus. Specifically, Katie's research explores preventative and feasible strategies educators can employ in inclusive classrooms to support the engagement of young children with language and behavioral support needs in preschool through early elementary grade classrooms. These research endeavors include partnering with educators to (1) compare popular, yet untested interventions with known effective practices, (2) adapt evidence-based practices to support the diverse array of young children in ECSE classrooms, (3) promote children's autonomy through environmental support strategies, and (4) empower educator implementation of effective and feasible instructional strategies to support young children with language and behavioral support needs. Katie also works as a methodologist with expertise in the measurement and synthesis of single case research designs. Finally, Katie leads the Early Childhood Institute at the Kansas University Center for Developmental Disabilities where she engages in community partnerships to support childcare centers and school districts in building educator expertise in designing inclusive, supportive, and equitable classrooms.

Teaching Interests:

- engagement strategies and supports
- environmental arrangement
- evidence-based instructional practices
- Pyramid Model practices

Research Interests:

- engagement strategies, interventions, and supports for young children with language and behavioral support needs to ensure equitable and sustained access to and participation in inclusive classrooms
- coaching and supporting educational staff to implement and adapt evidence-based instructional practices in inclusive classrooms
- measurement and synthesis of single case research design

Current Grant Funding:

Enhancing Engagement: Investigating Adaptations to Commonly Used Interventions for Elementary Students with Challenging Behavior. Institute of Education Sciences: Early Career Development and Mentorship Program.

Preparing Early Childhood Special Education Leaders for Diverse Settings (Project EARLY). Office of Special Education Programs, CFDA 84.325D, Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities: Preparation of Special Education, Early Intervention, and Related Services Leadership Personnel.

Project Meeting the Need (Project MounTaiN). Office of Special Education Programs, CFDA 84.325K, Interdisciplinary Preparation in Special Education, Early Intervention, and Related Services for Personnel Serving Children with Disabilities who have High-Intensity Needs, Focus Area B.

See faculty webpage - <https://specialedu.ku.edu/people/kathleen-tuck>

University of Kansas



Alana Schnitz, Ph.D. BCBA

Assistant Professor/ Assistant Research Professor

University of Kansas
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Lawrence, KS 66045

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Dr. Schnitz is an assistant research professor at Juniper Gardens Children's Project and assistant professor in Early Childhood Special Education. She completed her PhD. in Early Childhood Special Education from Vanderbilt University and was a Head Start Research Scholar for two years. Her dissertation evaluated the efficacy of the Positive Solutions for Families Intervention. Alana was formerly the research coordinator for the IES Goal 2 Teaching Pyramid Research Project. She also has participated in research around the Pyramid model, including coaching teachers to implement practices associated with the model. She has worked with Head Start teachers and families providing teacher and parent training, technical assistance to teachers, and providing behavioral support to families. Alana has 14 years of experience working with children who exhibit challenging behaviors as a coach; behavior specialist; and residential, family, and crisis counselor. She is also a Board Certified Behavior Analysts.

Current Grants:

Start Young- A grant to increase the quality and availability of childcare in Wynadotte County, KS.

Liter

Personnel Prep:

Office of Special Education, 325K, Project MounTaiN: Meeting The Need to Prepare Early Interventionists and Special Educators in Data-Based Instruction for Young Children with High- Intensity Support Needs

Office of Special Education Programs, CFDA 84.325D, Preparing Early Childhood Special Education Leaders for Diverse Settings (Project EARLY)

Teaching Interests:

Evidence-based instructional practices for families and children; curriculum and classroom design; Pyramid Model; early language and literacy strategies and supports

Research Interests:

engagement strategies, interventions, and supports for young children with language and behavioral support needs to ensure equitable and sustained access to and participation in inclusive classrooms

Washburn University Institute of Technology



Tammy Schrickel
Manager/Instructor
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I have a BS in Elementary and Special Education from Fort Hays State University and a MS in Special Education from Pittsburg State University. Throughout my education career, I have taught children with special needs from ages 5 to 21, ran my own family child care home, and have been the instructor for the Early Childhood Education program and the director of Little Learners at Washburn Tech since fall 2010.

My husband and I have been blessed with 6 children of our own and I have been honored to care for many, many surrogate children throughout my teaching career!

Teaching Interests:

While I was involved with teaching children with special needs, my main focus was community skills training.

My current role and passion is to train the next generation of early educators and ensure they understand the impact and importance of the work they do in the lives of young children.

Washburn University



Chloe Morris

Lecturer

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Chloe Morris is a Lecturer in the Education Department at Washburn University. Before joining as faculty at Washburn University, Chloe taught Early Childhood Education courses at Oklahoma State University and taught pre-k and third grade in rural Georgia. Chloe earned a Doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Language, Diversity, and Literacy Studies from Texas Tech University. Chloe's research, instruction, and outreach focus on preparing culturally sustaining teachers who partner effectively with diverse families.

Teaching Interests:

- Family-School Partnerships
- Field Experiences
- Belonging & Classroom Community

Wichita State University

Shelli Elliott

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Other Affiliations:

TAP leadership team, instructor, and success coach/mentor.

Wichita State University



Jennifer Kulp

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My name is Jennifer Kulp. I am the Literacy Coordinator for the Teacher Apprentice Program (TAP) at Wichita State University. I support TAP students as a success coach and an instructor. Our students are pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Child Unified and/or Elementary Education. Teaching is a passion of mine. I was a public school teacher for 24 years before my position with the Teacher Apprentice Program. It is a joy to assist students in pursuing a degree in a career I love.

Teaching Interests:

- Teacher Education Programs
- Literacy
- Classroom Management

Research Interests:

- Literacy
- Neurofeedback

Other Affiliations:

- Teacher Apprentice Program Leadership Team
- Lead Instructor for TAP Literacy Courses

Wichita State University

Aaryn Ludens

TAP Success Coach Coordinator

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Other Affiliations:

- TAP Leadership Team
- Instructor
- TAP Success Coach Mentor

Wichita State University



Ali Ray
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Ray is the Early Childhood and Special Education Coordinator for the Teacher Apprentice Program at Wichita State University. She teaches online courses that prepare paraeducators and preservice teachers to work in inclusive preschool and elementary classrooms. Her work emphasizes aligning program content with licensure standards, Praxis exam requirements, and best practices in early childhood education. Ali's teaching focuses on clarity, accessibility, and engagement. She integrates applied assignments and reflective discussions to help students connect theory to practice while balancing work, school, and family. In addition to teaching, she is involved in curriculum development and program alignment. She is committed to preparing educators who are reflective, adaptable, and well equipped to meet the diverse needs of children and families..

Teaching Interests:

- Early childhood unified education (Birth–PreK)
- Inclusive practices and differentiated instruction Online teaching and adult learning strategies
- Preparing paraeducators for teacher licensure

Research Interests

- Alignment of licensure standards and Praxis exams in teacher preparation
- Effective instructional design for asynchronous online programs
- Adult learning theory in higher education

Wichita State University



Julie Thiele
Assistant Professor
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Julie Thiele, PhD, is an Assistant Professor and Instructional Coordinator in Wichita State University's Teacher Apprenticeship Program (TAP). She teaches a variety of ECU and Elementary Education courses in the areas of math, assessment, internships, mentoring, and classroom management.

Teaching Interests:

Math, Math for Exceptionalities, Early Childhood, Elementary Education, Assessment, Classroom Management, Mentoring, and Research in Education.

Research Interests:

Supporting Alternative Certification Pathway pre-service and in-service teachers, online education best practices, mathematics education birth-12, mentoring practices, and applied learning experiences.

Other Affiliations:

Memberships/Leadership Roles:

- ATE-Technology Committee
- KATM Executive Board President
- KBOR Educator Task Force, Universal Transfer for Elementary Education
- KATM Journal for Mathematics Teachers, Developer, Co-Editor, Editorial Board
- St. Luke's Early Learning Center, Board Member, 2022-present
- Professional Affiliations:
 - Association of Teacher Educators (ATE)
 - National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
 - National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics (NCSM)
 - National Association of Professional Development Schools (NAPDS)
 - Kansas Association of Teachers of Mathematics (KATM)
 - Kansas Learning First Alliance (KLFA)
- Grants:
 - Strengthening Pathways from Student to Teacher: Filling Special Education and Elementary Classroom Vacancies. (2024). Kansas Board of Regents. (\$100,000). PI: Julie Thiele, Project Team: Jill Wood, Sun Young Lee, Kimberly Wilson, Deborah Hamm, Wichita State University.
 - TAPping into PDS Supports for Success in Alternative Certification Pathways. (2023). University Research/Creative Activities Project, Wichita State University. (\$4,500). PI: Julie Thiele, Wichita State University.
 - TAPping into PDS Supports for Success in Alternative Certification Pathways. (2023). College of Applied Studies, Wichita State University. (\$2,000). PI: Julie Thiele, Project Team: Jill Wood, Shelli Elliott, Jennifer Kulp, Aaryn Ludens, Ali Ray, Wichita State University.
 - Strengthening Pathways from Student to Teacher: Filling Special Education and Elementary Classroom Vacancies. (2023). Kansas Board of Regents. (\$96,000). PI: Julie Thiele, Project Team: Jill Wood, Sun Young Lee, Kimberly Wilson, Deborah Hamm, Wichita State University.
 - Anchors and Bridges: Utilizing an Anchor Institution to Bridge the Digital Divide in Communities. (2023). Federal Communications Commission. (\$409,800). PI: Julie Thiele, Co-PI: Carolyn Speer, Wichita State University.

Wichita State University



Kimberly Wilson
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Dr. Kimberly Wilson, CCC-SLP is a full professor and department head in the Teacher Apprentice Literacy and Special education (TALS) department at Wichita State University. She is program chair for the Master of Arts in Teaching ECU, Master of Education in special education-ECU, and the Reading Specialist programs at WSU. Dr. Wilson specializes in early childhood, literacy, mentoring, and self-efficacy. She has over \$14 million in external funding and has published numerous articles and book chapters. Dr. Wilson has over three decades of experience working in education as an early childhood classroom teacher, faculty member, administrator, mentor, consultant, speech language pathologist, and classroom teacher. In her spare time, Dr. Wilson volunteers with the Wichita Public Schools, local private schools, and serves on numerous local, state, and national committees.

Teaching Interests:

- Early literacy
- Executive function
- Research methodology (quantitative)
- Reacher self-efficacy

Research Interests:

Psychosocial factors that impact youth outcomes, mentoring, emotional reactivity/regulation

Wichita State University



Jill Wood

Coordinator, Teacher Apprentice Program
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I am currently the coordinator of the Teacher Apprentice Program at Wichita State University. I taught all levels of K-12 education for 19 years before transitioning to higher education. For the past 9 years, I taught social studies methods courses and served as an administrator for alternate certification programs in Kansas.

Teaching Interests:

- Social Studies

Research Interests:

- My research interests include effective distance supervision strategies and creating effective courses for first-generation college students in online programs.