



# THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

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## Love in Education?



**Dr. Shannon B. Dermer**  
 Dean of the College of Education

Hello all. I am the Dean of the College of Education at Governors State University. In this College we have education, counseling, psychology, leadership, and school administration programs. All of these programs serve children, families, couples, and/or adults in some way. I am not an expert in all the areas in which we teach, but as Dean I have learned about each and have grown to respect and admire the variety of programs we house. I have been Dean of the College for the last four years and before that I was the Chair of the Division of Psychology and Counseling for many years and a faculty member in that Division. In all, I will soon be completing my 19th year at GSU.

I have seen a lot of change over the years but one thing that hasn't changed is the passion to serve students—whether they be staff, faculty, or administration. GSU has a strong tradition of serving many different types of students. Your faculty are at the heart of students' day-to-day activities at the University. They may differ in styles and their pedagogy, but most are at GSU because they want to spend the majority of their time teaching and working with students. Although we certainly honor research and publishing and have many faculty and administrators who are active in research, writing, and grants, the core mission and objective of GSU is to be a teaching university.

The theme for the College of Education this year is Love. Love and a secure attachment bond between children and their caretakers are key to optimal mental and physical health. A loving, dependable adult in a child's life helps them explore the world, develop their brain to its full potential and learn how to regulate their emotions, and that relationship sets the stage for future relationships. Typically, when we speak of love and attachment, we look to the parent/child relationship. However, other important adults can provide a template for secure attachment. Teachers can be loving, dependable adult figures in their students' lives and they can integrate love into their pedagogy (or andragogy for adult learning). Interestingly, the research on teaching shows the relationship between student and teacher is important for both. When students feel connected to and cared for by their teachers, they are more successful; when teachers feel more connected to their students they actually teach better!

The pedagogy of love is sometimes also referred to as critical love or affective pedagogy. Regardless of the specific theory, they all agree that love is a more powerful force than violence. Love is the essence of human experience and to feel accepted for being one's authentic self is one of the most kind, just, empowering things one human can do for another. Love, however, is not just a feeling—it is also an action. From this perspective, love cannot exist without justice. Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz discusses the idea of Critical Love, which focuses on the connection between love and justice, and evokes the teachings of people like bell hooks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. about the power of love. (cont.)

## Love in Education? (cont.)

Pedagogy infusing love focuses on the relationship between teachers and students—it is a relational framework. A pedagogy of love includes the presumption of good in every student. It also includes a focus on learning, not just rote memory. Education is not a grade; it is the ability to think and problem-solve in ways that can transform our world for the better. “When teaching is viewed as a way to help others take part in the challenges and pleasures of understanding our political, cultural, and natural worlds and becomes more capable in transforming these worlds, then we frequently need to affirm and understand (as much as we can) our students’ goodness” (Liston, 2008, p. 9). Love and the capacity for goodness is what compels people to want better for themselves, their communities, and the world. In teaching, it means honoring that goodness, giving grace, and looking for ways to support justice. This type of love focuses on intellect and emotion.

A pedagogy based on love is one that is attentive to the complexities and potential in each student. Each student has different needs and idiosyncrasies. To be understood and seen for the essence of oneself, rather than the identity students sometimes project to protect themselves, is one of the kindest, loving qualities a teacher can bring to their classroom. This is not a simple task and means teachers sometimes need to look within themselves to identify their own preconceptions and lay them to the side. To connect with our students and model learning one must stay curious about the world and our students rather than thinking we have all of the answers. To do this we must know ourselves and how our own anxieties can get in the way of a fully connected relationship. Having grace and empathy for each student means knowing and empathizing with each student’s areas of strength and growth. It means trying to identify and understand the obstacles that may impede growth and attending to our students as individuals.

I am not saying that a pedagogy of love is always easy, but it is the most powerful teaching tool a teacher can have. At the center of the human experience is the longing to be seen as good, worthy, and loveable. Teachers have the power to nurture that experience in their younger and older students. A pedagogy of love liberates the mind and the heart. So, I challenge each of you—whether you are teachers, clinicians, administrators, and/or leaders—to understand and harness the power of love.

**Shannon B. Dermer, Ph.D.**

*Dean of the College of Education*  
Governors State University

## COE IN THE NEWS

### GSU Gathers Humanitarian Aid for Turkey



**Dr. Figen Karadogan**  
*Assistant Professor*

Words to describe her heartbreak and pain escaped Governors State University’s (GSU) Dr. Figen Karadogan when she heard the news about the devastating earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, a natural disaster that took more than 50,000 lives.

Karadogan immediately began trying to get in touch with her family who still lived in Turkey, while simultaneously looking up any information she could find about the areas impacted. As the images came up, she couldn’t believe what she was seeing and couldn’t stop the thought, “they’re gone, they’re gone,” from running through her head.

As a feeling of helplessness began to set in after 30 to 45 minutes of calling her family with no luck, Karadogan was relieved to reach her family members, one by one, and learn that they were all safe and far away from the impacted site.

Despite not having direct connections to the area affected, Karadogan knew without hesitation that she wanted to do what she could to help those impacted. “All I could think of was, ‘what can I do? How can I help?’ So that night, immediately I contacted the Turkish American Cultural Alliance (TACA), so the next morning I was in contact with the Chair at the College of Education at Governors. The Dean of the College of Education, Shannon Dermer, provided full support to the drive.”

Being relatively new to GSU after moving from Michigan, Karadogan wasn’t sure if she could organize something on campus. She found that the faculty and staff at the College of Education were quick to help, and even encouraged her, in

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organizing a donation drive for the victims of the earthquakes in Turkey. The donation drive was live Wednesday, February 8, two days after the first earthquake hit.

The collection period was planned to last through February 17, though Karadogan was surprised to learn just how quickly the GSU community could respond to the request for donations and how generous they could be in providing aid. The drive's collection ended two days earlier than planned with all the clothing, cleaning supplies, and personal hygiene products received.

There were also contributions from Hello Montessori Preschool & Kindergarten and Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School, though about 85% of the total donations came from GSU. It took two trips with two vans full of boxes and bags of items, cargo pressed against the back of the vans, to get all the donations to TACA.

"I can't find the right words to explain the gratitude to how people responded," said Karadogan. "I even found bags of items in front of my own house. I couldn't believe it. I don't know how they heard, and I don't know who dropped those. It was unbelievable."

After taking inventory of everything gathered through the drive, Karadogan noted that almost everything on TACA's list of requested items was covered, including clothing, sleeping bags, and tents.

"It just worked so amazingly. I really thank from the bottom of my heart that they're my family here [GSU] and they didn't leave me alone in those efforts," said Karadogan. "College of Education immediately responded and allowed me to start everything right away. I'm so glad we were able to unite and offer help."

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## Family Development Center – Space Available



The exterior of the unusual-looking concrete building on the Governors State University campus does not do justice to the sunlit, bright, and cheerful classrooms and spaces that make up GSU's Family Development Center. The FDC is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and has three main programs, Early Head Start, Preschool For All and after school childcare, offering much needed quality care and services to the greater GSU community. Space is available for all programs.

Early Head Start (EHS) is a federally funded program for pregnant women, children under age three, and children with disabilities. In addition to on-site care, the Center also provides a home visiting program and services to pregnant women. According to Erin Soto, Executive Director of the FDC, "we provide parents with the education that allows them to be their child's best first teacher."

Shamika Jefferson is part of the Early Head Start home visiting program. "I walked into the doors literally a day after I found out I was pregnant with my second child. They gave me as many resources as they could to help me at that time and I followed through with the meetings through my pregnancy." Now a mom of two and a student herself, Jefferson says, "It makes me feel great that my family is supported by GSU."

Preschool For All is an educational program serving children three to five years old with funding by a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education. "All of our grant funded educational programs use a research-based curriculum that follows state, federal, and accreditation standards," explains Soto.

In addition to students from GSU's surrounding external communities, the FDC provides day care for GSU students and employees. "I am so blessed to have access to high quality and convenient day care right on campus," says Lauren Healy, a GSU Development Officer. "And as a new mother, it was a balm to my soul to be able to nurse them during the workday. With any other childcare center, I would have been away from them for nine to ten hours a day." GSU also offers grants to

students to help cover the cost of childcare at the FDC. Information can be found at <https://www.govst.edu/ccampis/>.

After school care is also offered to children up to age eight.

The Center has a current enrollment of 121 children who reflect the demographics of the surrounding communities. About 86% are members of a minority group, and 73% have single parents.

Space is available for all FDC programs and information can be found at <https://www.govst.edu/fdc-early-head-start/>. Or call 708-235-7347 for more information or to make an appointment.

Successful community and GSU partnerships have resulted in additional services to the Center's families such as: free developmental and social emotional screenings to families of children under age five (partnership with Will County Child and Family Connections); mobile dental services (partnership with The Heart that Smiles); and supplemental speech services (provided by GSU's Communication Disorders personnel).

The Family Development Center offerings don't stop there. Ongoing programs include the following:

- Conscious Discipline Parent Education Training – monthly trainings a social emotional parenting curriculum, which is trauma based.
- Annual Father Engagement Activities
- Policy Council Meetings – a group of Head Start parents and community members who meet to help lead and make decisions about the FDC program
- Health Advisory Committee – a group of local health providers who meeting to support the children's health development
- Pop Up Sessions – provided by GSU's College of Health and Human Services personnel, topics have included Literacy at Home and Flu and RSV Facts
- Annual summer camp for children up to age eight

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## The College of Education and Love as a Protective Factor

“Love” is the College of Education's (COE) theme for this academic year amid challenges that have taken a toll on everyone's physical and mental wellbeing since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. COE Dean, Dr. Shannon Dermer, decided that love was a topic that she would interweave throughout the events and activities of the year. “During COVID, people experienced a lot of separation issues, anxiety, trauma, loss, etc.,” says Dean Dermer. “Love, or a secure attachment, has long been known as a protective factor for children and adults. It contributes to a sense of wellness, belonging, and security.”

During Governors State University's October Homecoming week, College of Education's faculty, staff, students, and alumni gathered to hear Dr. Lori Russell-Chapin, Co-director of the Center for Collaborative Brain Research at Bradley University, speak on “*The Protective Factor of Love on our Brains*”.

Dr. Russell-Chapin is an expert on the brain and counseling. “I wanted her to speak on love's physical effects on the brain,” said Dermer. “Love is romantic and/or nurturing and it has observable, measurable effects on people and relationships.”

As Dr. Russell-Chapin explained, love and compassion are also keys to healing. Her enthusiastic, engaging talk, complete with pictures of brain scans, explained how humans have had a difficult time during the pandemic. “I have many decades of private practice and have never seen people lose all their coping strategies. I have never seen people suffer so much,” she reported. “Those of us in the helping professions, we are in the right place and we are here to stay because everyone needs some help.” Russell-Chapin added that there is room for optimism and people can help themselves with activities such as getting outside, moving their bodies, and, especially, cutting down on



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screen time. She acknowledged that the screen time advice is the hardest for people to follow.

Before Russell-Chapin addressed the group, GSU President Cheryl Green offered some words of encouragement, noting that “some might scoff at the idea of academics talking about love.” But, she added, “I think their cynicism is rooted in a misunderstanding of what love is. I agree with bell hooks when she says ‘love is as important as work, as crucial to our survival as a nation as our drive to succeed.’” She ended her remarks by exhorting attendees “to lean into this conversation about love tonight. And may we, as educators, lean deep into the power of love to ground ourselves, to care for our students.”

Connie Schrage, Administrative Assistant in the COE Dean’s Office, kept the Love theme in mind when planning COE’s fall all-college meeting. Tables contained suggestions for self-care and the meeting agenda included affirmations and reminded participants that those who engage in acts of self-care may experience less stress and more resilience. She is already planning the spring all-college meeting which will focus on looking outward with kindness, love, and acceptance of others. “GSU is a ‘kaleidoscope of people’ and just like a kaleidoscope when they are brought together it creates something very beautiful,” noted Schrage.

The love theme was also on display during the well-attended October First Friday, co-sponsored by the College of Education and the University Library. The first 50 attendees received a copy of “What is Love?” by Mac Barnett. Attendees sipped on a love potion punch and shared their own ideas of what love is, including: “sacrifice”; “family”; “my wife”; “acceptance and freedom”; and “coming home to my puppy.”

As Russell-Chapin ended her formal remarks at the homecoming event, she issued a challenge to her audience. “What are you going to do for your brain and what are you going to do for someone else? Love in action is what we need now,” she added, with a nod to the late congressman John Lewis.

As GSU prepares to take its winter break, Dermer also reminds us that “authentic connection is a no cost gift that can have a lifelong, positive impact.”

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## COE Launches Open Access Journal of Applied Disciplines

Governors State University’s Journal of Applied Disciplines (JAD) was recently launched to fill a void in academic publishing. It was important to founder Dr. Alli Cipra, Associate Professor in GSU’s Division of Psychology and Counseling, to “create a space for faculty, researchers, and students who don’t have access to pay for journals,” she explains.



Dr. Alli Cipra  
Associate Professor

Cipra tells the story of a student doing research and wanting to read a paper from a journal to which the GSU Library did not subscribe. “The cost to access the paper was \$35.99 for 72 hours,” she reported. “And it is not like the money goes to the authors, that money goes to the journals. I wanted to get rid of that. I think research and science and education should be accessible to everybody. Open access is the best way I know how to do that.”

“I want people to know that research is not about an ivory tower. It is about real people, many of them first generation, learning about ways to improve our world,” said Cipra.

There are costs associated with publishing even an online journal but GSU’s mission is about making education accessible. So, the College of Education decided to cover the costs, rather than following the normal practice of charging a publication fee to the authors.

“The College of Education is proud to support an open access journal that does not charge for submissions. We support this through some release time for the editor and providing student help,” said College of Education Dean Shannon Dermer.

JAD will publish contemporary research in areas such as psychology (Dr. Cipra’s field), counseling, education, social work,

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physical/occupational therapy and the broader social sciences. Cipra explains that the Journal is “about creating a platform where people can show the intersection of their work in lots of different areas because, for example, psychology should not be psychology in a vacuum.

Students have a place to publish without paying for the publishing fees many journals charge in JAD’s Spotlight on Student Research feature. Dr. Cipra points out that while student papers go through the blind review process, they are given an extra layer of support in terms of feedback and opportunities for revisions. Another benefit is that students will have the prospect of working on the back end of the Journal – copyediting, checking citations, etc. “We have a really active student research lab here at GSU,” Cipra explains. “Our students are so excited to have the chance to work on the Journal.”

For faculty, the Journal provides an opportunity for peer-reviewed publishing credits, without the long wait that sometimes occurs. Some publications take up to two years to go from submission to print. Faculty working toward tenure often can’t wait that long and if research is ongoing, findings may already be updated by the time papers are actually published. GSU faculty also have the opportunity for external service by acting as reviewers or serving on the editorial board.

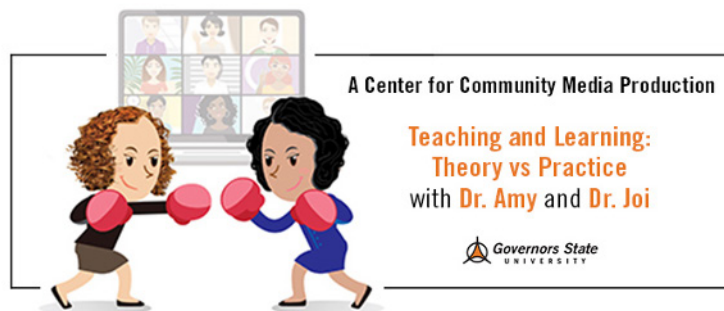
GSU benefits too. “Governors State University’s name is right there on each publication,” Cipra said. “And an open access journal fits nicely into our mission to provide an accessible education to our students.”

The Journal of Applied Disciplines is currently in what Cipra calls the soft launch phase. Articles are under review and there are plans to publish two times a year for the time being.

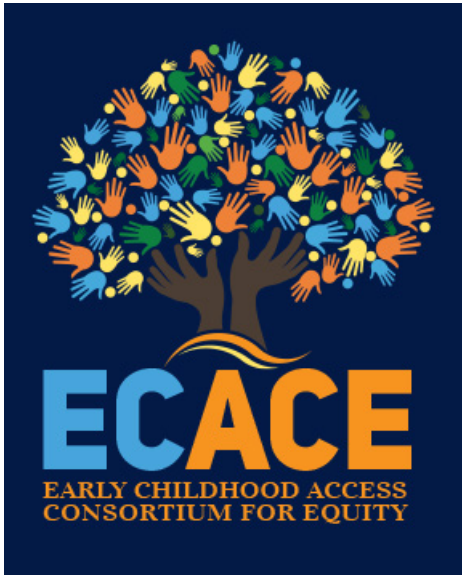
“An extra benefit is the opportunity for “early online publication,” explains Dr. Cipra. “Because the Journal is online and open access, we don’t have to wait for the whole issue to be ready before we make a paper accessible online.”

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## Listen to Teaching and Learning: Theory vs Practice with Dr. Amy and Dr. Joi



Supported by GSU’s Center for Community Media, this podcast features a wide variety of guests and topics that bring “attention to education and elevating the importance of diversity and inclusion.” You can find the podcast on GSU’s webpage (<https://www.govst.edu/teaching-and-learning-podcast/>). In addition you will find “T&L Clipped Content”, which are mini episodes curated for K-12 educators. Dr. Joi Patterson, Chief Diversity Officer, and Dr. Amy Vujaklija, Director of Educator Preparation, Accreditation, and Assessment, bring decades of education experience to these informative and interesting conversations.



## ***Megan Walsh, Grants Program Coordinator***

As an Illinois public higher education institution, Governors State University is a member of the Early Childhood Access Consortium for Equity (ECACE), supporting the goal of improving access to higher education to individuals currently working in early childhood education.

Responding to the current early childhood educator shortage, State of Illinois legislators noted the large number of individuals already in the early childhood workforce who could benefit from returning to school and make progress toward additional Gateways to Opportunity credentials by earning a bachelor's or master's degree, as well as earning a teaching license. To help support the incumbent workforce, the State of Illinois passed legislation to make funding available to redesign higher education pathways toward degree completion and provide student scholarships to encourage individuals currently in the field to return to school.

The legislation led to the development of the ECACE grant, which made it possible for GSU to further meet the needs of working adults. Early Childhood Education faculty and staff developed a bachelor's degree pathway that includes online and evening classes, as well as job embedded field experiences. Dr. Katy E. Hisrich, Early Childhood Education Chair, notes, "We designed the program to meet the needs of full-time working students in early childhood education; the program fits the schedule at their job and connects to the work they are already doing as paraprofessionals in schools and teachers in childcare centers." Online and evening classes allow students to begin their studies after finishing work, avoiding the need to allocate time to commute to campus or take time during work hours. Also, students have the opportunity to complete job-embedded field experiences; this means that students can complete hours for some clinical field experience courses at their place of employment (i.e. their school or center). In doing this, it helps ease the stress on students and employers, thus benefiting everyone.

The ECACE grant funding has made it possible for Governors State University to hire veteran early childhood teachers to mentor the workforce students, supporting them as they progress through the program to degree completion. GSU recognizes that earning a college degree can be difficult and even more so when you have numerous personal and professional responsibilities, including returning to school after an extended period of time. Mentors are available to help students with emotional and educational supports. They help students navigate the higher education system, provide university resources, offer ideas on how to be successful in courses (e.g., study skills, organization, etc.), and provide continued encouragement.

The Early Childhood Education workforce pathway students have completed their first semester at Governors State University and has been a great success. "GSU is excited to see the growth in enrollment in the Early Childhood Education program, due to the new program pathway. Without the funding provided by the state to the program at Governors State University, fewer early childhood teachers and paraprofessionals would be able to enroll in this high-quality, cost-efficient program. The ECACE grant allows GSU to increase the number of teachers with a Professional Educator License (PEL) in early childhood education, teachers badly needed by the schools in our region." says Dr. Hisrich.

Legislative funding for the [ECACE scholarship](#) helps remove barriers for students by covering the entire cost of attendance for eligible students. The ECACE scholarship is open to individuals that are currently working or have worked in the early childhood education field and have received an AAS in Early Childhood Education from a State of Illinois Community College.

Individuals interested in learning more about the Early Childhood Education program at Governors State University should visit <https://www.govst.edu/earlychildhoodeducation/>. If you or someone you know are interested in applying for the ECACE scholarship, application information is available at <https://www.isac.org/ECACEscholarship>.

# Empathy in Early Childhood



Erin Soto  
Executive Director,  
Family Development Center

## *Erin Soto, Executive Director, Family Development Center*

One-year-old Scarlet leans over to pick up a toy she dropped on the floor and bumps her head on the shelf in the process. Two-year-old Antonio rushes over to provide comfort and give her a hug. In Heart Room, five-year-old Taylor, visibly upset, goes to sit in the quiet cube/calm down center. His teacher walks over to talk to him and asks if she can help. Tyler says “I just got so mad. I didn’t like the way they were playing, and I didn’t want my madness to go on them, so I came over to the cube.”

Early childhood is the time for setting foundational skills of emotional learning. But concepts such as empathy are not easily taught through black and white lesson plans. Instead, children learn these concepts through modeling.

While many people describe empathy as “feeling others feelings,” in reality empathy requires us to listen and consider our children’s feeling without attempting to change them. Telling children, “you’re fine” or attempting to distract them with objects lacks empathy and does not model for children the essential skills of how to regulate their emotions.

One approach we use in at the Governors State University Family Development Center is the D.N.A. approach from our Conscious Discipline Curriculum. D.N.A. stands for Describe, Name and Acknowledge.

For example, if a child throws a toy on the ground when they’re asked to clean up we would say, “you threw your toy” (describe). “You’re angry” (name the emotion). “You really wanted more time to play” (acknowledge). We would then offer the child an opportunity to self regulate by choosing one of several calming techniques. Once a child has gained a bit of regulation we would then offer choices for how they can help clean up.

As an adult, remaining self-regulated is a key component of this process. You can’t teach what you don’t have, so if you’re feeling angry and impatient, anger and impatience is what you will model. It’s ok if you need to step aside to take a few breaths. It is the perfect opportunity to model for your child what healthy self-regulation looks like. For example, “I’m getting upset, I’m going to take a minute to breathe. When my body is calm, I’ll come back and we’ll work to solve this problem together.” Big emotions are scary to children, in themselves and when they observe them in their caregivers. Emphasizing empathy and connection helps build trust in your child that they are safe and loved, two key ingredients necessary for children to build the foundation for higher order thinking skills.





# Loving Kindness: An Invitation to Practice

*Timothy W. Pedigo, Ph.D.*

***“I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear.”***

Martin Luther King, Jr.



Dr. Tim Pedigo  
Assistant Professor

I began writing this article just prior to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, January 16th. Dr. King is a great inspiration for me and for many others to continue the long work of social justice and the hope of a better America. So much of what he stood for was undergirded by love. As you may know by now, the theme for the College of Education this academic year is also love. In the tradition Dr. King's message and this year's theme, I suggest that we engage together in a practice of intentional love.

Whatever the word “love” brings up for you, I would like to suggest that for our purposes, we view love as showing kindness to each other (students, faculty, staff, and administrators). The term “Loving Kindness” offers a different association than the word “love” alone and is actually a well know practice in the mindfulness tradition. I am inviting you to implement the theme of the COE and thereby practice Loving Kindness Meditation (LKM) to build stronger and better relational connectedness as a base to encourage creativity and satisfaction.

In order to practice LKM we first need to settle our minds (whether we use meditation, yoga, going for a walk, music, or any other means). Learning to let go and relax is not so easy but it is essential if we are not going to crash from chronic stress. Yet, it's hard to relax with a never-ending list of things to accomplish. Can we set time aside anyway to settle our minds, take a break from the list for a short time? A short break to settle our minds helps with how we engage our day. Setting the time aside is easier to do when we realize that when we are more grounded, we are generally more present and efficient.

Once our minds are settled, we can begin to foster a sense of loving kindness to all beings, even those we don't know or those we conflict with. LKM doesn't mean we are going to somehow know everyone or pretend we don't have conflicts with people (especially serious conflicts). We will continue to have connections with people who are friends and colleagues, and others with whom we conflict. Even those we conflict with also experience pain and vulnerability and seek to improve themselves and the world from their perspective (which may be very different our ours). But if we can connect with the underlying common humanity of others, even when we disagree, we are likely to deal with our differences better, and sometimes even resolve them. As Dr. King has said, “Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.”

It is best to practice LKM 10 minutes several times a week. The practice is meant to strengthen our intention by repeating a phrase. We begin with ourselves:

***May I be free from overwhelm and worry.***  
***May feel calm and relaxed.***  
***May I be open and connect with others.***  
***May I experience the connectedness at GSU***

Once the above phrase is repeated for a few minutes then we repeat the same phrase for: 1) people we easily connect with; 2) those we don't know; and, 3) those whom we experience conflict.

For each of these three groups we repeat the following.

***May (he/she/they) be free from overwhelm and worry.***  
***May (he/she/they) feel calm and relaxed.***  
***May (he/she/they) be open and connect with others.***  
***May (he/she/they) experience connectedness at GSU.***

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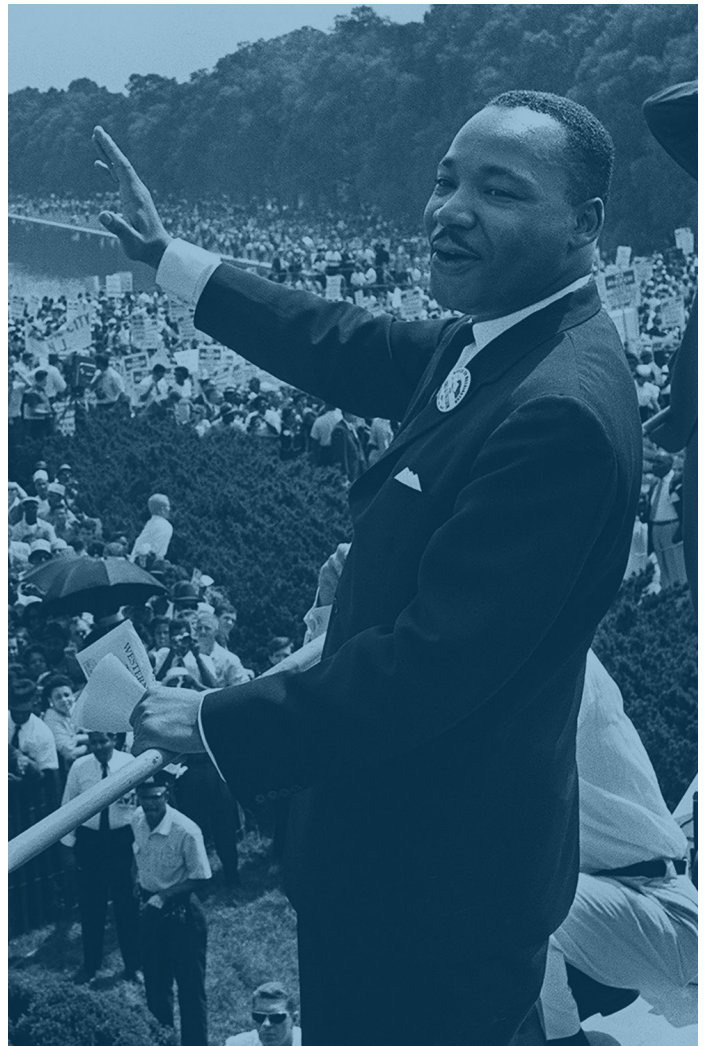
The fifth and final repetition is for all people at GSU. The phrase begins, “May all people at GSU . . .”

At first when you are practicing you may not genuinely feel any of the words you are saying, and it may even feel forced or fake. However, if somewhere inside you there is an intention for GSU to be a place where we can all feel more connected, eventually that motivation will come to consciousness and become more prominent. The more it’s in our minds, the more it can be realized in our relationships. When we realize our intention to be kind through the day, we are more likely to engage in kindness. As Dr. King has said, “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn life around.”

To work with ourselves to feel and experience a greater sense of connectedness at GSU is a very practical goal that takes practice. I hope you accept my invitation and join the rest of us who will practice LKM at GSU. I leave you with one last quote,

***“I am convinced that love is the most durable power in the world. It is not an expression of impractical idealism, but of practical realism.”***

Martin Luther King Jr.



## COE Play Therapy Workshop: Friday, June 16, 2023



Governors State University's College of Education is hosting a special Play Therapy workshop for educators and therapists on Friday, June 16, on the stage of the GSU Center for Performing Arts, 9:00am to 3:30pm.

Two highly regarded experts will discuss the role of play therapy in treating and educating children and train attendees in the basic skills of play therapy. Those who attend this workshop in person will be provided with a continental breakfast, lunch and a basic play therapy kit as part of their workshop fee.

For those attending virtually via Zoom, once registration is complete a discount code will be provided so virtual attendees can purchase their own play therapy kit.

All attendees are eligible to earn five hours of Continuing Education (CE) or Continuing Professional Development Units (CPDU).

Presenters:



Dr. Elaina Gil

### **Dr. Elaina Gil**

*Partner at the Gil Institute and a well-known expert in the field of Play Therapy*

Dr. Gil will discuss common effects of childhood trauma, how children make sense of interpersonal trauma, the types of relational, attachment, and social issues they can find challenging, and how to respond in a developmentally-appropriate way. Children's art work will give us a window into children's perceptions of abuse, and there will be information on assessment that does not rely on verbal communication. This workshop will highlight how expressive therapies have a role in allowing children to show, rather than tell, what's on their minds. Several examples of play and art therapy interventions will be shown.



Dr. TJ Schoonover

### **Dr. TJ Schoonover**

*Assistant Professor, Counseling and Higher Education, Northern Illinois University*

Dr. Schoonover will outline some of the basic play therapy skills both counselors and educators can utilize to assist children and adolescents to develop healthier emotional and behavioral skills. Research supports that higher emotional intelligence results in better attendance at school, better academic outcomes, and better interpersonal skills. Although not everyone attending the conference will go on to be certified in play therapy, there are still basic skills all can use to enhance interactions during "play" activities. Each in-person attendee will be provided with basic play-therapy kits to utilize during the workshop and then take home to use.

For more information and to register, [click here](#).

If you have questions, please contact Penny Perdue, [pperdue@govst.edu](mailto:pperdue@govst.edu).

## Meet Some of Our Newest COE Faculty Members

### Carla B. Cheatham, M.Ed., NCC, LCPC (IL), GCDF

*Instructor*

*Division of Psychology and Counseling*



**If teaching was your first love as a career, what other avocation did you consider?**

I originally planned to be a sportswriter/photographer. I was also a high school counselor for 25 years. If I didn't go into teaching, I would love to travel around the world to meet people and discuss food (like Anthony Bourdain).

**On a Saturday afternoon you will probably find me** watching a game, cooking, doing homework, relaxing/hanging with family (especially pre-Covid).

**What bends your mind every time you think about it?** The divisiveness and beauty of the citizens of the world.

**My idea of a perfect day** would be handing out at the beach with friends laughing and watching the sunrise and sunset, with a concert on the beach and non-stop food delivery.

**My favorite fictional character** is a difficult question, but at the moment its Uhura (Star Trek), Loki, and Monica or Maria Rambeau (Marvel).

**Three things that are on my bucket list are** to attend a concert on the beach; edit and publish a book; and, host a family reunion that includes job training and college and career information and support for those family members in need.

**If I could have given myself advice when I was 18, it would have been** to start saving immediately, remember you don't know everything, and listen to your elders.

### Christopher A. Dignam, Ed.D.

*Assistant Professor of Education*

*Division of Education*



**Three things on my bucket list are** to drive/travel Route 66, learn to speak Gaelic, and build a greenhouse.

**The book that had the most profound effect on me was** *Discourses of Epictetus*.

**Some of my hobbies are** guitar, digital art, and audio engineering.

**My idea of a perfect day would be** spending time on a tropical island.

**What bends your mind every time you think about it?** The fact that we are all here, interacting with one another, within these carbon-based hydraulic units (weird!).

**What could you do with two million dollars to impact the greatest number of people?** Create a foundation to assist children who have navigated adverse childhood experiences to change lives and the lives that follow.

**Favorite fictional character is** Luke Skywalker

**Introvert or extrovert?** I am an extroverted introvert.

## Meet Some of Our Newest COE Faculty Members (cont.)

### Yejin Rho, Ph.D.

*Assistant Professor*

*Division of Psychology and Counseling*

**Three things that are on my bucket list are** travel to many nations, adopt a puppy, and play the piano again.

**If I could have given myself advice when I was 18, it would have been** to explore more about my identities and to try many possible options.

**Something everyone should do at least once in their life** is travel abroad.

**My list of hobbies includes** listen to music, do colorings, watch Netflix, and read novels (mystery stories).

**My idea of a perfect day would be** no hassle at work, a sunny day, and time with family or friends after work.

**The book that had the most profound effect on me was** *Daughter of the Wind: Three and a Half Times Around the Globe on Foot* by Han Bi-ya.

**On a Saturday afternoon, you will probably find me** at a coffee shop, restaurant, or park in the Loop, South Loop, or River North.

**What could you do with two million dollars to impact the greatest number of people?** Build public libraries at many places.

### Candace Smith, Ed.D.

*Assistant Professor*

*Division of Education*



**What bends your mind every time you think about it?** How we keep doing the same things and act surprised when nothing changes.

**My idea of a perfect day** is doing something active, outside with my husband and kids.

**Some of my hobbies include** working out, spending time in nature, and reading.

**Three things on my bucket list are** surfing in Costa Rica, a road trip with my husband and kids along the entire Pacific Coast Highway, and visiting the Greek Isles.

**If I could have given myself advice when I was 18, it would have been** that this is only temporary. Even if it seems hard, look for the moments of joy because it'll go by quickly. And don't use school loans – find another way.

**At least once in their life, everyone should** do the one thing that terrifies them and keeps them making excuses.

**On a Saturday afternoon you will probably find me** at one of my kid's sporting events or reading a book on my porch.

## Meet Some of Our Newest COE Faculty Members (cont.)

### **John (Corey) Steele, Ph.D.**

*Assistant Professor*

*Division of Psychology and Counseling*

**If I could have given myself advice when I was 18, it would have been** to be patient with yourself. Don't take any segment of your life for granted.

**If teaching was your first love as a career, what other avocation did you consider?** I figured out pretty early that I wanted to be a psychologist (when I was 17) and I fell in love with teaching when I was in grad school. It's hard to think of another career that would interest me, but in a different time and a different world I might be interested in pursuing a career as a chef.

**If I could switch places with someone (living or dead) for a day, it would be** my grandfather. He was born in 1938 and died in 2014. He lived through some of the most important and tumultuous times in U.S. history. I would like to have just a glimpse of some of what he witnessed and experienced.

**Three things on my bucket list are** learn to swim; do more international travel (I've only traveled outside of the U.S. twice. My family and I could not afford to travel when I was a child. I've been trying to play catch up as an adult.); and to write a book (something completely unrelated to my profession/career).

**If I could convince everyone in the world to do one thing at one point in time, it would be** to say "I love you" to someone and mean it. Allow someone to say "I love you" to you and accept it.

**At least once in their life, everyone should** consider greater understanding or compassion related to a matter or circumstance that you are typically more "close-minded" about.

## Congratulations to Newly Tenured COE Faculty!

At its June 10, 2022 meeting, the GSU Board of Trustees approved awarding tenure with promotion to the rank of Associate Professor to two COE faculty members: **Dr. Timothy Pedigo** from the Division of Psychology and Counseling and **Dr. Amy Vujaklija** from the Division of Education.

At its December 9, 2022 meeting, the GSU Board of Trustees approved early tenure by exception, with promotion to the rank of Associate Professor, to COE faculty member **Dr. Quincy Martin, III**, from the Division of Education.

### **Congratulations to all on this impressive achievement!**



Dr. Tim Pedigo



Dr. Amy Vujaklija



Dr. Quincy Martin, III

# Evolution of Special Education



**Dr. Steven Russell**  
**Full Professor, College of Education**

Dr. Steven Russell  
Full Professor,  
College of Education

I started my career in education teaching English and Speech in a high school. It was there that I was forced to recognize the inadequacies of the public education system in assisting struggling learners to meet the academic requirements of the school curriculum. It was heart-wrenching to watch these students who attempted to meet the expectations, despite their difficulties, with no assistance or support. After recognizing these needs, and further education for myself, I entered the exciting and burgeoning field of special education.

I began teaching students with exceptionalities during the early years before schools were required to accommodate these learners. We provided experimental education units and began using techniques and procedures that would later become standard for attempting to meet the needs of learners with difficulties beyond those of learners in the general education classroom. It was an exciting time, and a time when innovation and research were primary features of the education offered these students.

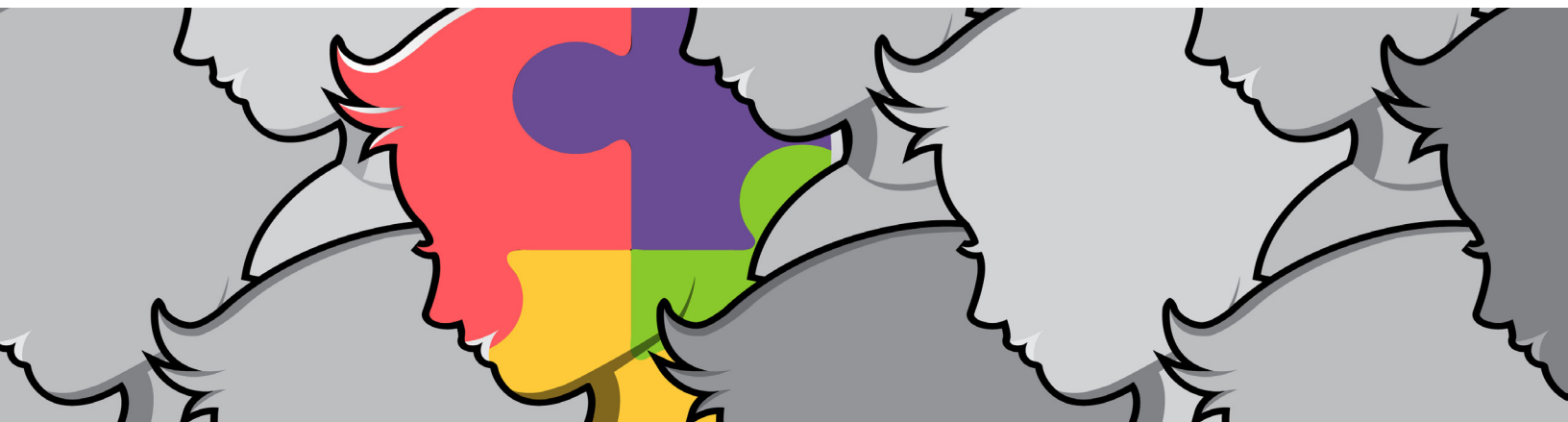
It wasn't long before the impact of two seminal cases were felt by public schools, that of *Mills vs. the Board of Education* and *PARC vs. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, both taking place in 1972. At stake in these cases was the accessibility of learners with exceptionalities to the public education system. The impact of these cases, as well as that of other instances of litigation, led to the passage of PL 94-142 in 1975 (later to become the IDEA of today). This piece of legislation, signed into law by then President Gerald Ford, insisted that learners with exceptionalities were the responsibility of public schools. They, too, were to be educated in public schools. They, too, were entitled to a "free appropriate public education." They, too, were to be provided accessibility to the public schools.

Today, more than 2 million public school students receive education planned to meet their unique needs. While accessibility was the first step, guaranteeing that ALL students have the right to a public school education, over the years our attention has turned from merely albeit important access, to accountability – that is, ensuring that the education offered to learners with exceptionalities is appropriate, meaningful, and results in verifiable outcomes.

It isn't so much a matter of "love," though it is important that our candidates for licensure in special education have a passion for the students they are assisting. More importantly, it is first a matter of accessibility, and most importantly a matter of accountability. Using evidence-based procedures and techniques, we offer students with exceptionalities an educational experience that permits each individual to achieve their maximum potential as a learner. Accountability is ensuring that we respect the diversity of learners, and recognize that some learners may need additional time, techniques, and procedures to achieve their goals as learners.

After nearly fifty years in special education, I continue to advocate for those who are vulnerable and struggling learners so that they can have the opportunity to reach their full potential through accessible and accountable education. While it might be viewed as "love" by some, I consider it showing respect for the diversity of learners, and knowing that ALL students have the potential to contribute to society. ALL students have the right to a "free appropriate public education" through our public education system. It is through compassion and caring that we can achieve this goal.

For information about GSU's Multicategorical Special Education Master's program, click [here](#).



## Mock Job Fair Held for 2023 COE Education Graduates

Job searches can be stressful for new graduates, but faculty in our nationally accredited Educator Preparation Program collaborated to help our candidates strengthen their interview skills.

On March 31, 2023, our student teachers (candidates) attended the first GSU mock job fair for education candidates. Held at the GSU campus, 28 candidates rotated to nine different tables staffed by human resource leaders from six partner school districts and three former school leaders from our GSU faculty. At each table, candidates practiced their interview “handshake” and shared copies of their resume. Candidates also were asked typical interview questions and given supportive feedback to improve their response skills.

The mock job fair was designed to benefit all stakeholders. GSU candidates practiced interviewing and received supportive feedback, while our partner school districts met with potential employees. Illinois is facing a critical shortage of teachers, and by engaging our diverse school district partners early in the employment cycle we hoped to increase their chance of hiring a highly qualified GSU graduate and mitigate the teacher pipeline shortage. Thank you to our valuable partners for volunteering:

- Joliet Public Schools District 86
- Calumet City School District 155
- Country Club Hills School District 160
- Crete-Monee School District 201u
- Community Consolidated Schools District 168 (Sauk Village)
- Hazel Crest School District 152½







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# COE THE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER  
[govst.edu/coe](http://govst.edu/coe)

## Online Teaching and Learning Certificate Program Online Information Sessions

Make yourself invaluable in any workplace (hybrid, blended, flipped, or fully online) with us! GSU's career-oriented Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Online Teaching and Learning (ONTL) offers firsthand experience in the evolving contemporary practice of online course design and innovation.

You can earn 18 graduate credit hours in one year and take all the courses with our approachable and seasoned instructors in a flexible, high-quality, inclusive, and online format that is perfect for busy working professionals. Each course project can be applied immediately to your current or future workplace, supplemental income job, and/or work after retirement. Come to the information sessions to chat with the instructors and current students and learn how this useful program can prepare you for in-demand, higher-paying jobs.

6/17/2023, 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.

<https://apply.govst.edu/register/COE061723>

7/15/2023, 9 a.m. – 10 a.m.

<https://apply.govst.edu/register/COE071523>

Please visit [govst.edu/ontl](http://govst.edu/ontl) or contact Dr. Li-Wei Peng at [ontladvisor@govst.edu](mailto:ontladvisor@govst.edu) for more information or questions.