

WEDNESDAY, OCT 22
DAY 1

NERA

3:15 - 4:45

Augustra

From Margins to Momentum: Innovative Strategies for Adult Learner Success

Theme-Based Paper Session / Symposium

Discussant: Javier Suarez Alvarez, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Chair: April Zenisky, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Presenters: Jennifer Lewis, Kat Tremblay, Maura Maxfield & April Zenisky
University of Massachusetts Amherst

Presenters explore some of the challenges adult learners face while earning a high school equivalency credential or learning English. This symposium offers examples of systemic barriers and the strategies adult learners, educators, and administrators are utilizing to reshape inequitable educational structures and celebrate the unique strengths of adult learners.

3:15 - 4:45

Hartford

Building on Parents'/Caregivers' Knowledge of Child Development to Foster Rural Students' Success

THEME-BASED PAPER SESSION / SYMPOSIUM

Discussant: Linda Banks Santilli, *Boston University*

Chair: Detris Adelabu, *Boston University*

Presenters: Detris Adelabu, Jerry Whitmore Jr., K'Nadja Sims, Mya Kelly, Jon Sibley, Dayanah Belcher, Jose Cruz & Jamila Rodriguez, *Boston University*

A strengths-based approach to childhood development in rural communities recognizes the potential of children and the resilience of their families and communities. Participants will learn about the impact of a relationship between an urban, northeastern College of Education and a rural elementary school in the South on student outcomes.

3:15 - 4:45

Montpelier

Music, Technology, and Performance in Student Learning and Well-Being

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Sousan Arafeh, *Southern Connecticut State University*

Chair: Lucy Gitiria, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

(Sessions details continued on next page)

The Power of Performance: Educator and Student Perspectives on Performing Arts Education and Adolescent Well-Being

Emily Fitzpatrick, Kristen DiGiovanni & Jennifer Flewelling, *Endicott College*

This study examines the perceptions of performing arts education on adolescent well-being. Using surveys and interviews, it reveals that students and educators view the performing arts as vital for emotional expression, confidence, and connection. Findings support the performing arts as essential to holistic student development and mental health.

Self-efficacy and Anxiety in Music and Non-music Preservice Teachers Using Mixed Reality Simulations

Marcia Delcourt, Antonia Madison, Marcia A. B. Delcourt, Jody Piro & Katie O'Callaghan, *Western Connecticut State University*; Erik Gundel, *Greenwich Public Schools*

This study was used to explore anxiety and self-efficacy in music and non-music pre-service teachers who experienced mixed reality simulations (MRS) in a course. A mixed methods multi-case study resulted in no significant differences for the two variables between groups. Interview responses supported the MRS experience.

Building Literacy Through Music: A Catalyst for Language Development

Shu Chen-Worley, *Touro University*

Teachers' knowledge of English greatly influences their instruction. For years, research has highlighted literacy achievement gaps in elementary and secondary education. This paper aims to demonstrate how music can engage diverse learners in building language skills creatively. Participants will explore how music affects learning and identify learners' strengths and talents.

3:15 - 4:45

Providence

Educational Leadership in Context

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Amit Joshi, *Cooper Medical School of Rowan University*

Chair: Cammie Jones-Friedrichs, *American Council on Education*

The Process by Which Teachers Transition from the Classroom to Supervisory Leadership

Anthony Bundy, *William Paterson University*

The purpose of this study is to revisit earlier research to identify leadership factors that teachers view as most influential in their choosing to pursue a supervisory career path (Bundy, A. 2020), and to develop recommendations to assist in the identification, selection and development of supervisory leaders.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Award-winning Public School Superintendents: Their stories of Leadership

Marcia Delcourt, Kaitlyn Kakadeles & Kristy Zaleta, *Western Connecticut State University*

This exploratory case study identified leadership characteristics of award-winning public school superintendents through the telling of their stories. With superintendency longevity at an all-time low, there is a need for leadership qualities to be explored. The results of this study provide insights for both aspiring and current leaders.

Investigating Equity Directors' Responsibilities and Expectations in Public Schools

Michael Riehl & Samuel Fancera

William Paterson University/ Evesham Township Schools

The researcher wrote a paper based on a mixed-method study that was conducted. The study looked into test frequency's role in the burnout rate of AP charter students. It also only surveyed charter school students in high school.

Leadership in Context: Examining School District Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors to Predict Superintendent Salary

Samuel Fancera, Lorena Valer & Ashley Mungiello, *William Paterson University*

This study examined district-level demographic and socioeconomic variables through the lens of context-responsive leadership theory to predict superintendent base salary. In the tested model, lower superintendent base salary was predicted in higher-poverty school districts and White students accounted for most of the variance in superintendent base salary.

5:00 - 5:45

Ballroom Foyer

Graduate Student Issues Committee Social

Take the opportunity to grab a snack and connect with other NERA graduate students in this social session sponsored by the GSIC.

WEDNESDAY, OCT 22

DAY 1

NERA

6:00 - 8:00

Ballroom

Dinner & Invited Keynote Address by Rachel Adams: Beyond Compliance: Neuro-Inclusive Support Strategies



PLENARY SESSION

Rachel Adams (she/her) is a PhD candidate studying neurodiversity and neuro-affirming advising practices in higher education. As the Associate Director for Education and Training within Disability Services at the University of Massachusetts, she has over 12 years of experience working directly with students, overseeing student education support programming, and providing faculty and staff professional development around disability inclusive practices. Her keynote will include scholar-practitioner experiences and insights into neuro-affirming practices. These experiences and insights will be shared through narrative examples of students that highlight the importance of developing supportive relationships, challenging deficit-based perceptions, and incorporating Universal Design principles. After sharing her research and lived-experiences, she will invite conference attendees to engage in an opportunity to practice these neuro-inclusive approaches that can be applied into their own work across different settings.

8:00 - 11:00

Merritt

NERA Welcome Reception and 3MT Competition

SOCIAL

Keep the excitement going at our welcome reception where you can catch up with old friends and meet new NERA colleagues. We are bringing back the fan favorite from last year – the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) competition! The academic competition focuses on fostering effective presentation and communication skills. Participants have three minutes to explain the breadth and significance of their research project to a non-specialist audience. Come watch and support our graduate student competitors!

THE
THREE MINUTE THESIS
COMPETITION

THURSDAY, OCT 23 DAY 2

NERA

7:00 - 8:15

Salon EFG

New Member Breakfast

SOCIAL

If you are new or new-ish to NERA and would like to meet others in our amazing organization, please join us for breakfast/coffee before starting your day on Thursday. You're welcome to drop in and ask questions about NERA and connect with new and seasoned members.



Grab breakfast in the main ballroom and join us in Salon EFG!

7:00 - 8:15

Main Ballroom

Breakfast

Join us for breakfast in the main ballroom to fuel up for an exciting day full of sessions!

8:30- 10:00

Augusta

Fundamentals, Flaws, and the Future of Standards-Based Assessment

THEME-BASED PAPER SESSION / SYMPOSIUM

Discussant: Jonathan Steinberg, *EurekaFacts*

Chair: Charlie DePascale, *Psychometric Confections, LLC*

Fundamentals, Flaws, and the Future of Standards-Based Assessment

Charles DePascale, *Psychometric Confections, LLC*; Kristen Huff, *Curriculum Associates*; Rochelle Michel, *Smarter Balanced*; Stephen Sireci, *UMASS Amherst*; Jonathan Steinberg, *EurekaFacts*

This moderated panel features NERA past presidents discussing standards-based assessment that supports all students. Panelists first identify fundamental principles that apply across assessment contexts. Panelists next discuss flaws in current assessment applications, focusing on future needs. To close, panelists share their vision of the future of standards-based assessment.

8:30 - 10:00

Boston-Concord

Insights into Student Effort in Low-Stakes Assessments Across Time and Testing Conditions

THEME-BASED PAPER SESSION / SYMPOSIUM

Discussant: Carol Barry, *American Board of Surgery*

Chair: Dena Pastor, *James Madison University*

Katarina Schaefer, Jack Gilmore, Mara McFadden, Jonathan Henriques, Dena Pastor, Sara Finney, Carol Barry
James Madison University

This symposium examines student effort and performance in low-stakes assessments, focusing on value-added estimates, test order effects, and the interaction of time of day with test sequence. Results highlight how contextual factors influence effort and inform assessment design to improve the accuracy of the interpretation of test scores.

8:30 - 10:00

Hartford

Different Ability and Inclusion in Educational Practice

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Matthew Speno, *Salem State University*

Chair: Allyson Clarke, *Howard University*

Who is Outside the Frame? Educators' Figured World of Inclusion

Katie Baulier, *Endicott College*

This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis to explore how educators' language reflects and reinforces beliefs about inclusion for students with disabilities. Findings highlight how euphemism, abstraction, and deficit-based framing undermine the enactment of authentic inclusion. The session offers strategies for shifting discourse to support equity, agency, and systemic reform.

Intersectionality in Special Education Classrooms: Exploring Differences in Autism Identification & Early Intervention

Mila Acosta-Morales, *Messiah University*

This paper focuses on the racial/ethnic disparities in identification and early intervention for autism spectrum disorder. After establishing that students of color are underrepresented in early identification/intervention programs, it explores why these disparities exist and what educators can do to help families of color achieve the best outcomes.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Disability storytelling and advice-giving as activism: Results from a 10-year longitudinal study

Annemarie Vaccaro, *University of Rhode Island*

Findings from a 10-year longitudinal study illuminate how storytelling and advice-giving from disabled people is a form of activism. Qualitative narratives from disabled youth and adults can inspire change by encouraging all of us to remove socially-constructed barriers and to fight ableism in education and beyond.

Trauma Training for Preschool Educators: A Phenomenological Case Study

Rachel Bond, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This phenomenological case study explores a trauma training program for preschool educators during COVID-19. Findings highlight persistent burnout, systemic underfunding, and the value of relational, body-based strategies. The study emphasizes the need for trauma training tailored to early educators' realities and supported by broader structural change.

8:30 - 10:00

Montpelier

Perspectives on Graduate Education

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Chair: Anna Nasyrova, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Discussant: Catherine Manly, *Fairleigh Dickinson University*

Sustaining Improvement: Exploring Alumni Engagement in Teaching and Mentoring Roles in an Online Ed.D. Program

Eleanor Abrams, *University of Massachusetts Lowell*

This study explores how alumni serve in teaching and mentoring roles within an online Ed.D. program to address faculty shortages and sustain program quality. Through interviews, the research examines alumni motivations, support needs, and belonging-revealing a mutually beneficial model that enhances student success and supports alumni professional growth.

Doctoral Motivation and Writing the Dissertation

Tricia Stewart, *Western Connecticut State University*; Nicole DeRonck, *Connecticut Technical Education and Career System*; Nicole Cote, *Western Connecticut State University*

Motivation is a complex and multifaceted construct that influences the completion of long-term academic tasks like dissertation writing. As doctoral students engage in this intensive and isolating process, their ability to sustain motivation becomes a determinant of progress and eventual success. Therefore, we offer solutions to maintain writing motivation.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Re-envisioning First Year Seminars: Skills Lab for Student Success

Laura Millay, Steven Quackenbush, Gareth Fuller, Kaitlyn Groh, Afua Kwarteng, Heather Pixley, Jeffrey Willis & Debra Allen, *University of Maine at Farmington*

This collaborative research explores a model to incorporate teaching college skills into first year seminar courses to support student success and retention.

The Source of my Discontent about Graduate Programs in Educational Measurement

Kurt Geisinger, *Buros Center for Testing*

This paper is intended to begin discussion about common omissions in educational measurement graduate programs. Four sources of my discontent follow: The need for information on the history of testing. Differential Psychology. Content of tests as opposed to quantitative procedures. Under emphasis on classical test theory.

8:30 - 10:00

Providence

Education Equity and Resilience for Youth in Global Contexts

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Jerry Whitmore Jr., *Boston University*

Chair: Marzhan Ayabekova, *UMass Lowell*

'We Keep Teaching': Educator Testimonies from Myanmar's War-Affected Schools

Lugyi No, *University of Massachusetts Lowell*

This study explores how teachers in Myanmar's conflict zones sustain education without formal systems. Drawing on focus group testimonies, it highlights resilience, moral purpose, and reliance on community support. These grassroots educators challenge traditional crisis response models, showing how education persists through informal networks, ethical leadership, and collective commitment.

Cultural Adaptation and Validation of the Intrafamilial Relationships Scale (ERI) for Salvadoran Youth

Fernando Mena Serrano & Javier Suarez Alvarez, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Using iterative translation, cognitive interviews, and psychometric modeling, we adapted the Intrafamilial Relationships Scale for Salvadoran students. The revised, three-factor instrument shows adequate reliability, invariance by gender and grade, and expected associations with mental-health measures, establishing its validity for researching family dynamics in Salvadoran schools and beyond.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Equitable Access of Every Child to Primary Education in Ekiti State of Nigeria

Samuel Olufemi ADEBULE, *Institute of Education, Ekiti State University, Ado Ekiti*

Equitable access to primary education is critical to ensuring sustainable development and social inclusion. In Ekiti State, Nigeria, renowned for its educational heritage, disparities in access still exist. This paper explores the current state of primary education accessibility, identifies barriers affecting equitable access, and proposes actionable strategies for inclusive education.

Research-Based Culture Content and Language Immersion: A Case Study

Lilliam Malavé López & Yuexiu Zhang, *University at Buffalo*

It presents research-based integrated formal and informal second language and culture learning experiences. Mandarin language/Chinese culture classes, mentoring, and site visits were provided through a six-week immersion SA. It focuses on the participants' increase in Mandarin language proficiency, interest in Chinese culture, and potential impact-multiplier effect.

10:15 - 11:45

Augusta

Education Equity and Resilience for Youth in Global Contexts

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Laura Millay, *University of Maine*

Chair: Kelsey Nason, *James Madison University*

Enhancing Systematic Review with Generative AI: A Transdisciplinary Team's Exploration of Tools, Tensions, and Transform

Marcus Harris, Jimmy Wilson, Mikayla Friday & Michael Vaccaro, *University of Connecticut*

This paper shares lessons from a transdisciplinary research team exploring AI in a systematic review on twice-exceptional ADHD students. We critically assess AI's strengths, limitations, and evolving roles across phases, idea generation, screening, extraction, and outreach, while reflecting on broader implications for equitable, reproducible, and inclusive educational research.

Using Artificial Intelligence to Align Adult Education Standards with Workplace Knowledge and Skills

Anna Sullivan & Fernando Mena Serrano, *UMass Amherst*

This study examined how artificial intelligence, specifically ChatGPT, can help align adult education assessment items with workplace knowledge and skills. We used data from the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) to compare the GPT-4o model with Deep Research and develop a process for tagging items with workforce-relevant information.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Engineering Education: A Review of the Literature

Benjamin Newbury, *New England Institute of Technology*

This paper aims to provide a review of current literature on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in engineering education to identify trends and gaps in the research. This paper will provide an analysis of conclusions drawn from the research regarding the prevalence and efficacy of AI in engineering education.

Adapting to AI: Prompting Gemini to Analyze Text-Based Responses and Considering Implications for Professional Knowledge

Laura Millay, *University of Maine*

This paper focuses on challenges encountered during an experiment to extract data from a set of Word documents and PDFs and discusses implications for data professionals learning to use AI.

10:15 - 11:45

Boston-Concord

Educational Policy, Teacher Development & Family Engagement

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Louise Shaw, *Southern Connecticut University*

Chair: Kate Nolan, *Amira Learning*

Teachers' perspectives and training to engage families in their child's academic success

Sarah Sanford, *Meriden Public Schools*

The role families play in their child's learning is often an overlooked component in education. This study examined K-5 teachers' perspectives on the ways they collaborate and engage with parents, and the training and resources they have been provided to successfully partner with the families in their schools.

Bridging Educational Silos: Exploring Professional Learning Opportunities through Academic Library?P12 Partnerships

Samuel Fancera & Neil Grimes, *William Paterson University*

This study explored academic library/public-school partnerships to support professional development and learning (PDL). Findings revealed shared interest and complementary goals, yet systemic barriers limited collaboration. Scalable models like pay-per-session PDL and certification programs offer promise for sustainable partnerships to enhance educators and institutions.

THURSDAY, OCT 23
DAY 2



A Model for Effective Professional Development in Reading for Elementary Schools

Dena Mortensen, *Central Connecticut State University*

This study aimed to determine whether elementary teachers found a new model of professional development (PD) effective in building their knowledge and strengthening their reading teaching practices. Classroom teachers participated in the PD and shared their perspectives through focus groups. The results suggested that teachers found the model effective.

Educational Policy and Legislation Grounded in Invitational Education: Reframing Deficit Models Through Inclusive System

Katherine Roe, *Western Connecticut State University*

AI methods deliver groundbreaking cost-effectiveness in measurement, but risk disconnecting from societal needs if trust and equity are neglected. This symposium presents four talks on culturally responsive principles, their application in adult skills assessments, AI-enhanced item development, and AI-driven feedback, charting the next generation of assessments.

10:15 - 11:45

Hartford

Next-Generation Assessment: Merging AI with Culturally Responsive Assessment Principles

THEME-BASED PAPER SESSION / SYMPOSIUM

Discussant: Jade Caines Lee, *University of Kansas*

Chair: Javier Suarez Alvarez, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Presenters: Javier Suarez Alvarez, Stephen G. Sireci, Omayya Horton, Anna Nasyrova, Aria Immanuel, Vafa Alakbarova, Lucy Gitiria & Peter Tran, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

AI methods deliver groundbreaking cost-effectiveness in measurement, but risk disconnecting from societal needs if trust and equity are neglected. This symposium presents four talks on culturally responsive principles, their application in adult skills assessments, AI-enhanced item development, and AI-driven feedback, charting the next generation of assessments.

10:15 - 11:45

Montpelier

Navigating Polarization and Building Shared Visions in Education

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Musbah Shaheen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Chair: Tram-Anh Nguyen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

The Middle Ground: Teachers' Perceptions of Inclusion in Middle School

Katie Baulier, *Endicott College*; Zach Rossetti, *Boston University*

This study examines how middle school teachers perceive inclusion for students with disabilities and identifies key organizational, environmental, attitudinal, and knowledge-based barriers that hinder its implementation. Findings inform strategies for transforming beliefs, policies, and practices to foster more inclusive secondary school environments.

Algorithm to Administration: Polarization's Path into U.S. Schools

Diego Leaver

This study traces how media-driven polarization evolved into a structural force shaping U.S. education policy from 2018 to 2025. The analysis of media trends, trust data, and federal actions shows how fragmented information systems undermine consensus, transforming public education into a contested site of ideological and institutional instability.

The Search for a Shared Vision: Understanding the Policies and Purposes of Civic Education

Brendan Sheran, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This paper investigates the policies and purposes of civic education in a politically polarized U.S. Using a literature review and qualitative analysis of policymakers, educators, and students, it finds consensus on importance but conflict over content and implementation, highlighting the need for a shared vision for civic education.

Bridging Cultures: Teacher Cultural Competence & Student Engagement

Deirdre Rood, *William Paterson University*

This study explores how middle school teachers' cultural competence relates to their perceptions of student engagement across diverse school settings. Findings reveal a positive correlation between cultural preparedness and engagement, offering implications for professional development, equity-focused curriculum design, and policy decisions aimed at fostering inclusive, responsive classroom environments.

10:15 -11:45

Providence

Transitions and College Pathways for Students with Different Abilities & Backgrounds

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Kevin Krost, *Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University*

Chair: Kat Tremblay, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Transition Planning Team Membership for Adolescents with Intellectual Disabilities

Kristyn Corace, *Middletown Township Board of Education*

The qualitative descriptive study was designed to contribute to the understanding of transition planning for adolescents with intellectual disabilities. The research study provided information regarding the process from personal experiences. As an experienced special educator, recommendations were made to improve the transition planning process for students and their families.

Academic Self-perceptions of First-Generation and Continuing-generation College Student

Marcia Delcourt, David Ciskowski, Marsha Daria & Jeanette Moore, *Western Connecticut State University*

Social cognitive theory reflects emergent agency by combining cognitive, motivational, and affective processes. Five indicators of self-perception, pathways thinking, GPA, and undergraduate status were used to predict agency thinking, $R^2 \text{ adj.} = .516$. Being a first-generation student was significantly correlated with attitudes toward teachers and self-reported GPA.

High School Case Managers' Perspectives of College Programs for Students with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities

Sarah Dubin, *Rowan University*

This study employs a generic qualitative inquiry approach to examine the perspectives of high school special education case managers on college programs for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities. Findings suggest a need for collaboration and increased awareness to maximize the potential for students with IDD to attend college.

Assessing Career Construction for College Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Sarah Ferguson & Sarah Dubin, *Rowan University*

This study explores the modification and validation of a career development measure for college students with intellectual disabilities. Grounded in Career Construction Theory and inclusive research practices, the project aims to improve accessibility in measurement and contribute to more equitable approaches in postsecondary education and career development research.

THURSDAY, OCT 23 DAY 2

NERA

11:30 - 12:45

Ballroom

Lunch & Invited Keynote Address by Dr. Babara Helms: 95 Years of NERA

PLENARY SESSION



This keynote session examines the history of a regional educational research association, which was founded in 1930. While this is the 56th annual conference, we could call it the 95th annual conference. Looking back at old programs and newsletters as well as on personal experience, my presentation highlights the crucial role NERA has played in inspiring educational researchers to investigate the ever-changing impact of education on teachers, students, administrators, families, and the broader community. NERA has grown from the New York State Educational Research Association to a regional association spanning all of New England and the eastern coast to Harrisburg, Virginia.

1:15 - 2:45

Providence

Self-Efficacy: Pathways and Confidences of Special Education and Secondary General Education Teachers

THEME-BASED PAPER SESSION / SYMPOSIUM

Chair/Discussant: Ellina Chenobilsky

Presenters: Lorin Hannah, Joanne Jasmine & Michael Raguseo, *Caldwell University*

This presentation explores how self-efficacy, belief in the capability to perform tasks successfully, can indicate teacher behavior, performance, and effectiveness in the classroom across multiple settings. Presentations will introduce and explore the impact of teacher self-efficacy (TSE) on student achievement and how applications of TSE can be universal.

THURSDAY, OCT 23
DAY 2

NERA

1:15 - 2:45

Boston-Concord

Understanding Stimuli, Cognition, and Cultural Responsiveness in Test Items

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Thierry Elin-Saintine, *Stockton University*

Chair: Maria Kosogorova, *Russian School of Mathematics*

Item Logic: Explicit & Deliberate Understanding of How Test Items Prompt Cognition and Responses

Marjorie Wine, *ATLAS, University of Kansas*; Alexander Hoffman, *AleDev Research & Consulting*

Item logic (the idea for how an item elicits evidence of proficiency) is usually implicit-limiting scalability, training, and item quality. This paper explores how explicit item logic improves item validity, supports professional judgment, and contributes evidence to support the interpretability of test scores for the proposed uses of tests.

The Cross-Content Stimulus Evaluation Framework: Recognizing the Relevant Qualities of Stimuli for Assessment Items

Marjorie Wine, *ATLAS, University of Kansas*; Alexander Hoffman, *AleDev Research & Consulting*

Stimuli shape how items function, influencing difficulty, fairness, and validity. The Cross-Content Stimulus Evaluation Framework (C2SEF) introduces a cognitively grounded approach for analyzing stimuli in large-scale assessments, offering eleven interrelated dimensions to support thoughtful evaluation and decision-making across content areas, alignment references, and diverse test taker populations.

STEM item generation: Can ChatGPT be culturally responsive?

Laura Lambert, *James Madison University*

This study evaluates AI-generated multiple-choice items and how a user's query history influences content. Along with tokenization of culture, query history was found to influence multiple aspects of the items. These findings have implications for test developers considering genAI tools that preserve a user's query history.

Student Experiences and Voices in Higher Education

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Cecile Sam, *Rowan University*

Chair: Lucy Gitiria, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Student perceptions of mistake-related peer interactions in college courses

Maleka Donaldson, *Smith College*

In college courses, trial-and-error practice and corrective feedback are foundational. The nature of peer interactions shapes whether and how undergraduates face their mistakes to help build their knowledge and skill. This interview study explores how students perceive the peer culture of learning from mistakes at the collegiate level.

Geography Matters: The Geography of Opportunity and Student Loan Default

Betul Iscan, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This study explores whether college graduates' rural, urban, or suburban backgrounds are related to their likelihood of student loan default. Using national data and statistical modeling, results show that geographic background is not statistically related to student loan default.

Mining Student Voices: Using Text Mining to Analyze Open-Ended Responses in a First-Generation Student Support Program

Xiaoye Yang & HsienYuan Hsu, *UMass Lowell*; Cuibing Wu, *Framingham State University*

Open-ended student feedback provides valuable insights into program effectiveness, but is difficult to analyze at scale. This study demonstrates how text mining can efficiently process large volumes of qualitative feedback in evaluating a one-semester curriculum designed to support first-year, first-generation college students' transition to university life.

Student Experiences in a Hyflex Flipped College Algebra Course

Laura Millay, Jonathan Bayless, Afua Kwarteng, Kaitlyn Groh, Heather Pixley & Debra Allen
University of Maine at Augusta

This collaborative research explores experiences of three college algebra students in a flipped classroom with pre-work, group work problem-solving sessions, and bi-weekly one-on-one meetings with an undergraduate student assistant. Differences and challenges in the students' experiences add nuance to our thinking about implementing flipped classrooms.

1:15- 2:45

Exploring Teacher Preparation, Practice, and Professional Roles

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: CJ Burton, *Southern Connecticut State University*

Chair: Barbara Helms, *Freelance Editor*

Enhancing Nonfiction Writing through Peer Review: A Student-Centered, Cross-Curricular Approach

Vaishali Golivadekar, Mathew Mariani & Christian Mathews, *CJCP Somerset, NJ*

This study explores how student-centered practices and cross-curricular collaboration enhance content understanding. Nonfiction writing, often undervalued, can significantly boost academic performance. A single, interdisciplinary nonfiction assignment across core subjects fosters clarity, critical thinking, and real-world connections, leading to measurable improvements in student engagement and overall learning outcomes.

A Comprehensive Review of Teacher Cognitive Load Research

Kristopher Bertoglio, *New York City Public Schools*

In the spirit of education for every mind, this is the first review of teacher cognitive load research. This paper synthesizes 52 studies exploring the causes and effects of teacher cognitive load. To support future research and practical applications, this review examines applicable frameworks and implications.

Paraeducators in Public Secondary Schools: Their Roles and Work Experiences

Marcia Delcourt, Lisa Daigle & Katherine Roe, *Western Connecticut State University*;

Lauren Moyer, *Fairfield Public Schools*

Paraeducators need a voice to describe their joys and frustrations. A case study captured the perceptions of these professionals with respect to their work experiences. Seven themes were found from responses to interviews and open-ended questions, indicating the changes paraeducators recommend for their profession.

Early Teaching Intensives (ETIs) as a Crucial Stage of Teacher Education

Graeham Dodd & Sam Intrator, *Smith College*

Amid increasing teacher shortages, Early Teaching Intensives (ETIs) that recruit young people into teaching roles in summer camps and out-of-school programs are proliferating. This paper explores this emerging movement's landscape and presents mixed-method findings on participant learning outcomes and their implications for teacher education pathways.

QuantCrit, Qualitative Inquiry, and Expanding the Research Landscape

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Tabitha Bellamy, *New Jersey Department of Education*

Chair: Jonathan Steinberg, *EurekaFact*

Expanding the Research Enterprise at Non-Research-Intensive Universities

Tricia Stewart, Katie Lever & Paul Steinmetz, *Western Connecticut State University*

This case study sought to better understand incidents of faculty research, including grant procurement and student research. We found a need for non-research-intensive universities to expand the research enterprise with various leverages to facilitate research engagement for each faculty member based on rank and department and include students.

In Pursuit of 'Something Greater': A General Qualitative Inquiry of Career Calling for Non-Tenure Track Faculty

Marjorie Blicharz, *Rowan University*

Individuals choose their career based on career interest, skills, or perhaps by experiencing a career calling. This General Qualitative Inquiry highlights non-tenure track (NTT) faculty experiences through a self-determination theory and career calling framework. Results include faculty recollections of purpose, pro-social impact, and hard-to-quantify feelings.

Reframing Quantitative Methods: A Systematic Review of CRT and QuantCrit in Educational Research

Catherina Villafuerte, *University of Connecticut*

This systematic review examines integrations of Critical Race Theory and Quantitative Criticalism in U.S. educational research. Analyzing 76 peer-reviewed studies (2019–2024), the review identifies methodological innovations in sampling, culturally responsive measurement, and equity-centered analyses, providing implications for advancing quantitative research methodologies grounded in educational justice.

But, It's Not Enough: The Importance of Qualitative Methods in a Quantitative World

Omaya Horton, Vafa Alakbarova, & Rebecca Woodland, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Quantitative methods often lack the nuanced information provided by qualitative data, especially regarding marginalized communities (Randall et al., 2023). This paper argues for a mixed methods approach to address quantitative limitations. A case study demonstrates how qualitative data filled gaps in survey results, leading to a more accurate evaluation.

3:00 - 4:15

Augusta

Studies in School Safety and Climate and Educator/Student Well-Being

THEME-BASED PAPER SESSION / SYMPOSIUM

Discussant/Chair: Lori Cooper, *Wilkes University*

Presenters: Lori Cooper, Ally Bear, Colleen Penzone, Melanie Christopher, Kali Reb & Lisa Marie Ferry
Wilkes University

This symposium presents research on school climate, safety, and social-emotional learning. Studies address restorative practices, educator well-being, resilience, professional development, and student mental health interventions. Findings highlight evidence-based adaptations in practice and research across educational contexts, with implications for promoting supportive environments.

3:00 - 4:15

Boston-Concord

Differential Item Functioning and Test Security

PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Scott Monroe, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Chair: Tram-Anh Nguyen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Comparison of the IRT-C Model and ECDM for Detecting and Explaining Differential Item Functioning

Kevin Krost, *Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University*

This study evaluated the presence of DIF on the TIMSS between EFL and ML students. Several items exhibited significant DIF under both the IRT-C and E-CDM. Examining covariates, home educational resources explained ten items. In four items, a causal mechanism was identified and concluded to exhibit item bias.

Toward Equity in STEM Large-Scale Assessment: Validity Evidence from DIF Analyses with 2PL and GPCM

Jungwon Kyung, Craig Wells & Stephen Sireci, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This study investigates gender-based differential item functioning on the MCAS Science and Technology/Engineering Test to promote equity in STEM assessment. Using logistic regression and IRT methods, findings provide validity evidence and examine fairness in large-scale testing, supporting equitable assessment practices for all students.

Assessing Pre-Exposure Risks of LLM-Generated Item Pools

Sergio Araneda & Christopher Foster, *Caveon*

This study introduces and empirically evaluates item pre-exposure a novel test security risk associated with AI-generated items. Using simulations we examine how likely it is that unauthorized users can reproduce test items before they are ever administered.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Impact of compromised items and examinee preknowledge on the shape of EAP posterior distributions

Kevin O'Rourke & Lisa Keller, *UMASS Amherst*

A simulation study looked at the impact of compromised items (CI) and examinees with preknowledge (EWP) on the shape of the posterior distributions of EAP estimation. 5 levels/conditions were tested, and results were compared using both the IPL and 2PL models for comparison.

3:00 - 4:15

Hartford

Student Work Habits, Self-Efficacy & Pathways to Learning

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Beth Perkins, *American Association of Colleges and Universities*

Chairs: Anna Sullivan, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

A Quasi-Experimental Evaluation of the Writing Pathway Writing Program for 7th and 8th Grade Students

Heather Harris, *Herkimer Consulting*

Steve Graham, *Arizona State University*

Sherry Lewkowicz & Phil Weinberg, *Writing Pathway Innovation Lab at Teaching Lab*

A pilot study evaluating the use of the Writing Pathway AI tool for creating practice writing exercises compared to conventional writing instruction was conducted for a sample of middle school students. Overall, use of the Writing Pathway tool was associated with large positive effects. However, future research is needed.

One classroom, multiple paths: how work habits predict academic achievement in differently paced 7th-grade students

Maria Kosogorova, Oksana Ilna, Sona Antonyan, Manasi Singhal, Jenya Brodskiaia & Anna Mirny, *Russian School of Mathematics*

Larry Ludlow, *Boston College*

This study examines how well classwork and homework behaviors predict academic success among Grade 7 students in an online math program. We split students within one classroom by learning pace, revealing two distinct groups with differing success-related behaviors despite sharing the same level-supporting more targeted and differentiated instruction.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

The Association between Math Self-Efficacy and Math Achievement: A Comparison Across Gender and Race

Tram-Anh (Anh) Nguyen & Holly Laws, *UMass Amherst*

his study examines whether math self-efficacy predicts math achievement and whether this relationship varies by gender and race/ethnicity. Using multilevel modeling, results revealed significant group differences in both math scores and the strength of the self-efficacy-achievement link, highlighting implications for reducing achievement gaps through targeted interventions.

Pathways to AP Math in an Urban School District

Marcia Delcourt, Rachel Saunders & Marcia A. B. Delcourt, *Western Connecticut State University*

Kristy Zaleta & Laura Mead, *Danbury Public Schools, Rogers Park MS*

Mathematics outcomes were studied for secondary school students in a district that used open enrollment for entry to AP courses. Students completed algebra 1 in either grade 8 (pathway 1) or grade 9 (pathway 2). Those following pathway 1 had significantly higher AP and achievement scores than their peers.

3:00 - 4:15

Montpelier

Crisis, Culture & Censorship on College Campuses

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Jerry Whitmore Jr., *Boston University*

Chairs: Yifei Li, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Self-Censorship in DEI Conversations: Impact of Campus Climate for Viewpoint Diversity

Musbah Shaheen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This study explored self-censorship in diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations by examining their relationship with campus climate and context. Findings demonstrate the role of political orientation and the campus climate for viewpoint diversity in shaping the extent to which undergraduate students self-censor in DEI conversations.

Of Beer, Bro Code, and Bad Decisions: A Critical Autoethnographic Exploration of Masculinity at a White Fraternity

Musbah Shaheen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

In this paper, I use a critical auto-ethnographic approach to examine the construction of masculinity at a historically white fraternity. Through self-reflexive exploration, I interrogate myself in relation to, and in the context of, the structures, systems, ideologies, assumptions, and norms underlying the white fraternity culture.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Reimagining Higher Education in an Era of Polycrisis: Critical Evaluation and Strategic Foresight to illuminate everyone

Bryan Southworth, *UConn School of Business*

This paper weaves Harvey, Piketty, Meadows, Stein, and Schmachtenberger to \illuminate everyone's mind\ and envision equitable, sustainable learning amid a polycrisis. Empirical insights from 25 faculty interviews and 12 observations inform a research agenda merging Critical Evaluation with Strategic Foresight , cultivating systemic thinking, AI literacy, and educator-futurist leadership.

3:00 - 4:15

Providence

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Sophie Barnes, *Yale University*

Chairs: Jungwon Kyung, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Lessons Unlearned from the Pandemic: Leadership for the Outdoor Classroom

Wesley Meeker & Jess Gregory, *Southern Connecticut State University*

A study on a Northeast university's campus community garden revealed varied pandemic recollections. Administrators fondly recalled outdoor teaching innovations, while faculty remembered restrictive mandates. This paper examined these \learned and unlearned\ lessons from COVID-19 for higher education leaders regarding outdoor education and future indoor environmental risks.

illuminating Shadows: Reconnecting Adolescents with Nature through Tao-a/r/tographic Pedagogy

Mengkai Zhang

This inquiry explores how Tao-a/r/tography can support adolescents with electronic addiction in reconnecting with nature. Through outdoor observation, art-making, interdisciplinary exploration, and peer teaching-learning, they engaged in slow, reflective learning that fostered sensory awareness, and holistic well-being in an increasingly digital world.

Exploratory Case Study of Educators' Experiences: Compassion Fatigue as an Unintended Consequence of a Pandemic

Peter Dittmar, Tricia Stewart & Nicole Deronck, *Western Connecticut State University*

Sheri Prendergast, *Ridgefield Public Schools*

This qualitative exploratory case study seeks to gain knowledge of educators' experiences with compassion fatigue during the global pandemic. Due to the lack of research on educator secondary traumatic stress, it is important to understand the perceptions of educators during this time and how to support them in the future.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Exploring Motivation, Attitudes, Behavior, and School Climate in Predicting Environmental Awareness in Hong Kong Grade 8

Lifen Hu, *SUNY Albany*

Analysis of TIMSS-2023 data for 4,463 Hong Kong Grade-8 students showed that environmental awareness is driven by motivation, environmental attitudes, and behaviors. School climate and teaching exposure were non-significant, though disadvantaged schools and girls lagged. Results emphasized student agency and education to achieve SDG 4.7.

4:30 - 5:45

Saloon EFG

POSTER SESSION

Interpersonal Competence in Evaluation: Stakeholder Experience, Team Perception, and Learning Reflections

Susannah Marcucci, Youlim Lee, Lugyi No, Taghrid Elterk & FNU Lhaden, *UMass Lowell*

This study explores the role of interpersonal competence in program evaluation. Results indicate that interpersonal competence enhances both stakeholder satisfaction and evaluator development. Findings underscore the need for intentional training and reflective practice in evaluation education to promote inclusive, ethically grounded evaluations.

Cultivating Teacher Leaders: A Study of Strategy Design and Professional Development

Samuel Fancera, *William Paterson University*

This study explores strategies to enhance teacher leadership and the design of professional development modules to support their implementation. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from school leaders and teacher leaders, findings highlight key practices to foster leadership and collaboration. Results inform scalable, school-based approaches to teacher leadership.

Longitudinal Study of K-12 Principal Leadership Coaching Perspectives: Balancing Immediate Needs with Long-Term Goals

Jenna Nichols, *University of Pennsylvania*

This study examines the changing dynamics of coach-principal dyads during a year-long coaching process for K-12 principals. Using interviews and phenomenological analysis, we examine how goals are set and addressed, how coach-principal relationships grow, and how coaches and principals drive professional and personal development in sessions.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Empowering Children by Expanding Teachers' Knowledge of Adaptive and Assistive Technologies

Johanna Kerrigan, Joy Dangora Erickson & Jennifer Flewelling, *Endicott College*

This capstone explores teacher perceptions of adaptive technology (AT) in learning. Through educator surveys, it identifies gaps in AT understanding and integration. Findings informed a professional development module equipping teachers with practical, inclusive strategies to use AT effectively, promoting equity, innovation, and support for all learners.

Accounting for Nesting and Measurement Error in Criterion-Related Validity for Behavioral Screening

Katie Pelton & D. Betsy McCoach, *University of Connecticut*

This simulation study aims to understand how contextual effects – which impact both predictor and criterion measures – impact criterion-related validity estimates when relating total scores across behavioral measures. We vary intraclass correlation and degree of error and compare correlations, multilevel linear regression, structural equation models (SEM), and multilevel SEM.

Evaluating Item Fit Using the Nominal Response Model

Andrea Hebert, Kevin O'Rourke & Lisa Keller, *Cognia/UMass*

This study examines model fit for the Nominal Response Model (NRM) using simulated and real-world assessment data. The analysis explores how response category sparsity and examinee ability relate to item calibration quality. Preliminary findings suggest NRM has potential for item modeling under specific data conditions, informing future psychometric research.

Analysis of Exam Items for Assessment of Undergraduate Knowledge of Chemistry

Erica Light, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

To assess effectiveness of an undergraduate chemistry curriculum, this analysis applied both item-response theory (IRT) and classical test theory (CTT) models. Data are from a pilot multiple-choice examination administered across three levels with 148 chemistry students in spring of 2018. Results would contribute to reliable program assessment.

Evaluating Knowledge Tracing, Process Mining, and Graph-Based Models for Advanced Learning Analytics

Jungwon Kyung, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This systematic review compares knowledge tracing, process mining, and graph-based models in K-12 STEM education, examining their effectiveness, interpretability, and equity implications for advanced learning analytics. Findings guide AI-enhanced, personalized, and explainable learning interventions to inform equitable educational practices and future research.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Validating the DRIVE Intervention: Long-term Retention of Dialogic Reading Strategies in Elementary School Students

Cassie Nemec & Xochitl Sanchez Guerrero, *Southern Connecticut State University*

The current study is a follow up from Year 2 (2023–2024) of the cross-age DRIVE intervention pilot to assess how well students retain the EMPOWERED strategies they were trained on in Year 2 to read to first graders.

Improving Reading in Struggling Elementary Students Using a Cross-age Dialogic Reading Intervention: A Two-Year Study

Cheryl Durwin, Dina Moore & Cassie Nemec, *Southern Connecticut State University*

We present a two-year replication of a pilot study investigating whether dialogic reading can be implemented as a cross-age intervention in a Title I elementary school to improve below-average comprehension/vocabulary. Undergraduates trained fifth grade students (Big Buddies) to use the approach with first graders (Little Buddies).

Evaluating performance of IRT Residual DIF detection approach (RDIF) considering test length and scoring method

Haneul Lee & Craig Wells, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This study evaluates the performance of IRT Residual DIF detection method (RDIF) under various conditions, especially test lengths and scoring methods through simulation studies. Specifically, this study compares DIF detection accuracy of RDIF across test lengths and scoring methods, also investigates the conditions in which RDIF most effectively identifies DIF.

Elevating Success: Understanding the Aspirations of High-Achieving Rural African American Students

Olivia Adelabu, *Princeton University*

This study examines the goals and aspirations of high-achieving, rural African American students. Grounded in goal-setting theory, it explores how gender, GPA, and parental education influence goal quantity, type, and temporal extension (short or long-term). This work reframes deficit narratives to highlight this often-overlooked population.

Upper Elementary Teachers' Values: Barriers to students' self-determination in autonomy-supportive classrooms

Sarah Goodale-O'Brien, *Endicott College*

This phenomenological study reveals the values and beliefs of upper elementary teachers in autonomy-supportive classrooms, identifying the supporters and barriers to students' self-determination. Implications emphasize the need for alignment between upper elementary teachers' values, students' motivational development, and school routines and policies in a post-COVID learning landscape.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Rethinking AI Writing Feedback to Embrace Epistemic Diversity

Jusil Lee

This study examines how ChatGPT's writing feedback may marginalize non-Western rhetorical styles and reinforce dominant epistemic norms. By focusing on learners whose ways of knowing differ culturally, it raises concerns about epistemic injustice and calls for critical reflection on the design of AI-mediated feedback in academic settings.

Impact of Teacher Training on Student Reading Achievement in Azerbaijan: A Propensity Score Matching Analysis

Vafa Alakbarova, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This study examines the causal impact of reading-focused teacher professional development on student reading achievement in Azerbaijan using PIRLS 2021 data. Propensity score matching addresses selection bias, comparing reading scores between students taught by trained and untrained teachers. Results show no significant effect of teacher training on student achievement.

Implementation of a Boys Ice Hockey Program: The Coaches' Perspective

Marcia Delcourt & Matthew Kelly, *Western Connecticut State University*

Amateur athletics are ingrained in American society. Due to the unique nature of boys ice hockey, recruitment, team formation, club membership, facilities, ranking systems, etc., differ from other sports. To understand these issues, this project will examine perceptions of head hockey coaches about their experiences in an athletic conference.

4:30 - 5:45

Merritt

Implicit Gender Bias in Large Vision? Language Models' Evaluations of Classroom Lessons

Miles Baldwin

Using a counterfactual audit, we tested whether the widely used vision-language model GPT-4o exhibits implicit bias when evaluating classroom lesson excerpts. Excerpts were embedded in images depicting a male or female teacher. Despite prompts to assess only the lesson text, evaluations were affected by teacher gender.

A Continuing Examination of Treatment Fidelity in a Cross-age Dialogic Reading Intervention

Cassie Nemec, *Southern Connecticut State University*

The current study examines the treatment fidelity of a cross-age DRIVE intervention in two consecutive school years. Fifth graders were trained on and later read to first graders using the approach. We present results on how well the EMPOWERED strategies were used during training and paired reading sessions.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

The Role of Marcussen and Søn in the Organ Reform Movement

Layla Joshi

Taghrid Elterk, *University of Massachusetts of Lowell*

Machine learning and natural language processing are increasingly utilized in evaluation studies; however, their trends are not well-documented. This scoping review assesses their application in evaluation studies and validity. Initial findings reveal limited detail on specific methods and minimal discussions of validity, calling for a more comprehensive methodological reporting.

Enhancing College Mental Health Help-Seeking through Emotional Intelligence: Recommendations from the Literature

Jolina Halloran, *Pace University*

This literature review examines how emotional intelligence, viewed through the SEL framework, influences college students' help-seeking attitudes. Findings show EI can reduce self-stigma but also increase sensitivity to judgment. SEL strategies are recommended to foster supportive campus environments and promote health help-seeking to enhance student well-being.

Comparative Evaluation of MI and Bootstrap Methods for Standard Error Estimation in IRT Score Inference

Lucy Gitiria & Scott Monroe, *University of Massachusetts, Amherst*

This study tackles calibration uncertainty by evaluating multiple imputations and bootstrap methods for estimating standard errors and confidence intervals related to IRT ability scores. Through a simulation-based design, the results will guide best practices for accurate score reporting and effective decision-making.

Primary Source Review as an Ideal Introduction to Historical Research

Vikram Joshi

Debbie Sharnak, *Rowan University*

This project, a collaboration between a high school student and a university professor, identified 10 key sources to explore the Ford Foundation's role in Argentina (1950–2000). It illustrates how structured primary source research can serve as an effective introduction to historical inquiry at the secondary level.

A Scoping Review of Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing Applications in Evaluation Studies

Ibrahim Osumanu, Bianca Montrosse-Moorhead, Kylie Anglin & Christopher Rhoads, *University of Connecticut*

Machine learning and natural language processing are increasingly utilized in evaluation studies; however, their trends are not well-documented. This scoping review assesses their application in evaluation studies and validity. Initial findings reveal limited detail on specific methods and minimal discussions of validity, calling for a more comprehensive methodological reporting.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

AN EARLY COLLEGE EXPERIENCE (ECE) PROGRAM: THE HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATORS' PERSPECTIVE

Marcia Delcourt & Raymond Manka, *Western Connecticut State University*

Frank LaBanca, *Area Cooperative Educational Services*

Jacob Greenwood, *Ridgefield Public Schools, Ridgefield, CT*

This study examines how ChatGPT's writing feedback may marginalize non-Western rhetorical styles and reinforce dominant epistemic norms. By focusing on learners whose ways of knowing differ culturally, it raises concerns about epistemic injustice and calls for critical reflection on the design of AI-mediated feedback in academic settings.

5:45 - 6:30

Parallel Post

NERA Mentoring Program Happy Hour

SOCIAL

A key part of every NERA conference, the mentoring program provides graduate students with the opportunity to meet with professionals in the field. Mentors can provide individualized feedback on research projects and/or dissertations, as well as provide guidance during the conference. If you are a part of the NERA mentoring program, this is your chance to meet your mentor/mentee face-to-face. If you are not a part of the program, consider signing up for the upcoming year.

6:30 - 8:30

Ballroom

Dinner and Presidential Address by NERA 2025 President Lisa Keller:

PLENARY SESSION

I am very excited about our theme this year, "Illuminating the Margins: Education for Every Mind." My choice of theme this year was born out of a personal experience in how assessments can be used to either block or promote opportunity, especially for those on the margins. Using my personal experience, and relevant research, I will discuss my thoughts about how I think about the use of assessments, what some possibilities are, and some promising research that supports the education and assessment for all students. This is a call for the end of a deficit-view of students on the margins to a strength-based approach, while keeping the expectations high for all.

THURSDAY, OCT 23
DAY 2

NERA

Merritt

8:30 - 11:00

NERA Presidential Reception - Featuring Karaoke with Frank Padellaro

SOCIAL

Join us for another fun social event! Research shows that play is beneficial for adults too! Come play a few rounds of music bingo and Jeopardy to compete with colleagues, win fun prizes and enjoy some time to play!



7:00 – 8:30

Ballroom

Breakfast and NERA Business Meeting – All are welcome and encouraged to attend!

Join us for breakfast (starting at 7:00) and the NERA business meeting (starting at 7:30) in the ballroom.

8:30 – 10:00

Salon EFG

Mindfulness, Movement, Nature & the Arts in Education

ROUNDTABLE SESSION

Chair: Tram-Anh Nguyen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Beyond the Spotlight: Illuminating South Asian Female Identity to Transcend Barriers and (Re)imagine Theatre Education

Sobha Kavanakudiyil, *The City College of New York – CUNY*

This research in progress examines factors influencing career pathways in the performing arts, centering on female-identifying performing artists from racially and ethnically diverse communities. The study applies the theoretical framework of Asian Critical Theory and Feminist Theory to explore how identity, culture, and institutional barriers shape professional trajectories.

Benefits of Mindfulness and Movement Routine- A Pilot Study

Sujata Norman & Sujata Norman, *The University of Hartford*

This study investigates an eight-week mindfulness and movement program to reduce burnout and stress among faculty and staff. Participants complete brief, twice-weekly video sessions. Pre- and post-assessments will evaluate mental and physical outcomes, offering insights into scalable, cost-effective strategies for enhancing well-being in academic environments.

Animal- and Environmental-Education Program Increases Prosociality in Students Throughout Grades 1 – 3

William Samuels & Calix Dela Santa, *Hunter College, CUNY*

A study of 1,960 students in China found that the Caring for Life program—combining animal- and nature-based content with academic instruction—significantly improved prosociality over three years. Results support school-based, biophilic interventions as effective tools for enhancing children's social development in non-Western educational contexts.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

FRIDAY, OCT 24
DAY 3



How Practicing Mindfulness and Understanding Self-Efficacy Foster Mindset Change in Pre-Service Teachers: The SEMS Study

Sujata Norman, *The University of Hartford*; Tiffany Bennett, *West Chester University of Pennsylvania*

This presentation explores how mindfulness and self-efficacy practices reduce stress, boost confidence, and support mindset shifts in teachers. The presentation discusses how the study engaged six participants in reflective exercises, collaborative discussions, and practical strategies designed to promote emotional resilience, teaching readiness, and long-term success in diverse classrooms.

8:30 - 10:00

Salon EFG

AI and Reimagined Learning

Chair: Tram-Anh Nguyen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Co-design Equitable Future for Generative AI supported Multilingual Writing

Geyong Zhang & Chuqi Wang, *Boston College*; Weiqiao Zhang, *Boston University*

With U.S. higher education's linguistic mononormativity and the rise of Generative AI, this study examines how Generative AI can support multilingual writers. Grounded in translanguaging, third space, and literacy networks, we co-create and analyze a workshop fostering inclusive, equitable writing practices leveraging AI, multilingual students' diverse resources.

Research-Based Culture Content and Language Immersion: A Case Study

Lilliam Malave, *University at Buffalo*

It presents research-based integrated formal and informal second language and culture learning experiences. Mandarin language/Chinese culture classes, mentoring, and site visits were provided through a six-week immersion SA. It focuses on the participants' increase in Mandarin language proficiency, interest in Chinese culture, and potential impact-multiplier effect.

Beyond the Algorithm: Reimagining Education through Transformative Applications of Artificial Intelligence

Pravallika Vemulapalli, *University of Bridgeport*

This paper reflects in-progress research regarding the effects of redlining on educational policy within the United States generally and New Haven, Connecticut specifically. To explore this topic, the research will consist of archival research within the New Haven Mayoral Papers and the evaluation of relevant literature.

(Sessions details continued on next page)

Illuminating the Margins with AI-Enhanced Virtual Reality in STEM Education

Jungwon Kyung, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This systematic review explores how AI-enhanced VR in computer and science education can support personalized, equitable learning aligned with NERA's theme, \Illuminating the Margins.\ Findings highlight the potential of immersive technologies to improve conceptual understanding and engagement for diverse learners while addressing accessibility and equity in STEM education.

8:30 - 10:00

Salon EFG

Supporting Students with Diverse Needs Worldwide

ROUNDTABLE SESSION

Chair: Tram-Anh Nguyen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Learning in the Shadows: Afghan Girls Resisting Taliban Bans through Underground and Digital Education Spaces

Marzhan Ayabekova, *University of Massachusetts Lowell*

This in-progress study examines how Afghan girls resist education bans through informal learning. Drawing on feminist and resilience theories, it analyzes existing literature to frame education as political resistance. With IRB approval pending, the next phase will involve interviews with Afghan students and NGO educators to deepen the analysis.

Educating for Gross National Happiness in Bhutanese Schools: A Literature Review

FNU Lhaden, *University of Massachusetts Lowell*

This review examines Bhutanese teachers' conceptualizations and implementation of Gross National Happiness education. It highlights philosophical foundations, pedagogical practices, and systemic challenges. Findings reveal varied understanding, limited resources, and policy-practice gaps. Implications include the need for clearer guidance, sustained teacher support, and alignment between holistic goals and classroom realities.

Challenges Facing Primary-Aged Students with Special Needs in Trinidad and Tobago: A Literature Review

Natakki Jones & Kayon Murray-Johnson, *University of Rhode Island*

This integrative literature review examines challenges impacting public school students with special needs in Trinidad and Tobago. Preliminary findings include: teacher/administrator negative perspectives, inadequate policy implementation; lack of resources; siloed practice, and advocacy efforts. Findings show need for research on implementation of inclusion for students with varied special needs.

Urban Middle School General Education Teacher Beliefs In Supporting Students with Disabilities

Nisha Acharya Julien, *Center for Measurement Justice*

This mixed methods study explored urban middle school general educators' beliefs and comfort in supporting students with disabilities (SWDs) in inclusive classrooms. Survey results (N=75) and follow-up interviews (N=5) revealed positive beliefs about inclusion but low confidence in adapting instruction for SWDs, highlighting a key implementation gap.

FRIDAY, OCT 24
DAY 3

NERA
Salon EFG

8:30 - 10:00

Rights, Resources & Student Leadership

ROUNDTABLE SESSION

Chair: Tram-Anh Nguyen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

One Hour, Lasting Impact: Librarian Reflections on Inclusive Research Instruction in First-Year Writing

Youlim Lee, *UMass Lowell*

This study examines how academic librarians reflect on inclusive teaching in one-shot research instruction for first-year writing. Through interviews and analysis of instructional materials, it identifies strategies like affirming tone and cultural relevance. Findings point to institutional constraints and offer guidance for improving instructional design and collaboration.

The CRDC and Civil Rights for Students in LEA Policies, Do We Still Have Those?

Wendy Jean Sonstrom, *LEARN Regional Educational Service Center*

The latest Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) had required questions about student harassment and bullying policies on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, and religion. With CRDC submission during a period of policy upheaval (winter 2025), this case study of a Northeastern state is an exploration of this dissonance.

Stakeholder-Driven Evaluation of Learning Resources: A Case Study in Participatory Evaluation

Vafa Alakbarova, Rebecca Woodland, Charlotte Elwell & Omayya Horton, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This article presents a participatory evaluation of a nonprofit supporting caregivers. Through collaborative weekly stakeholder meetings, surveys and interviews, and joint analysis, the study assesses resource effectiveness and user needs. Findings from 353 surveys and interviews show how centering stakeholder voices strengthens evaluation rigor, learning, and practical application.

Amplifying SOGIE student leadership: An inquiry into student-led inclusion practices in an urban high school

Lauren Chicorsk, *Metropolitan Business Academy*

This research in progress roundtable presentation shares a qualitative study of a student-led, citywide Gender and Sexuality Alliance summit in an urban public school district. The summit was designed to celebrate SOGIE, or LGBTQ+, student strengths, challenge deficit perspectives, and connect to district practices through UDL and student leadership.

FRIDAY, OCT 24
DAY 3

NERA
Salon EFG

8:30 - 10:00

Critical Perspectives on Access and Persistence in College

ROUNDTABLE SESSION

Chair: Tram-Anh Nguyen, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Using Intergroup Threat Theory to Investigate International Students' Intent to Remain in the US

Amber St Marie, Joseph Sireci & H. Michael Crowson, *University of Oklahoma*

Intergroup Threat Theory (ITT) is used to explore the long-term residency and work intentions of graduate students in a conservative state during the second Trump presidency. Adaptations of standardized measures of threat are utilized to explore how the political climate is perceived and impacts long-term intentions of students

The First Year Experience: A Critical Narrative Inquiry of the First College Year for Neurodivergent Students

Kerri Jarzabski, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

This paper explores the meaning making of neurodivergent students as they consider their lived experiences navigating their first year of college in an ableist postsecondary environment. Findings are based on data collected through semi-structured interviews with 11 participants at a large public university in the northeast.

Exploring the vocational callings and barriers of foster youth in college- a mixed methods design

Marjorie Blicharz, *Rowan University*

This proposed mixed-methods design explores the lived experiences of foster youth in college as they navigate higher education and develop their vocation. Through a qualitative-dominant sequential transformative design, their experiences can interrogate current systems, spotlight their voices, and lead to change in policy and practice.

A Critical Case Study: No Such Thing as 'Special Education' in Higher Education

Julianna Perez, *Rowan University*

The purpose of this critical case study is to determine how students with disabilities experience an important transitional period in their educational journeys, and how the professors and larger institutions they commit to attending influence the development of this aspect of their identity.

Measurement Models and Methodological Assumptions

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Rochelle Michel, *Smarter Balance*

Chair: Laura Lambert, *James Madison University*

Can GenAI Score Ethical Reasoning Essays? Evaluating Copilot with Interrater Agreement and Rasch Modeling

Kaijie Liu, John D. Hathcoat, Yu Bao, Hunter R. Castleton, *James Madison University*

Though performance assessments, especially essays, are widely used to evaluate student learning, their scoring process can be time- and resource-intensive. This study explores whether Microsoft Copilot can serve as a consistent and reliable rater of ethical reasoning essays using interrater agreement, interrater reliability, and a Many-Facets Rasch Model.

Are Diagnostic Classification Models with Partial Monotonicity Constraints Enough to Ensure Accurate Classifications?

Alfonso Martinez, *Fordham University*

Diagnostic classification models require monotonicity constraints on the item parameters to ensure model identifiability and proper model interpretation; however, these constraints are inconsistently enforced in practice and software. Via a simulation study, we examine how different monotonicity constraint enforcement strategies affect the accuracy of examinee attribute/profile classifications.

Analyzing the Dimensionality of Personality Scales Using Positively and Negatively Worded Items

Aria Immanuel & Stephen Sireci, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

The application of positive and negative items simultaneously threatens the internal structure of the psychological scales. This study provided an empirical analysis of the threats using both item styles in a measure of personality scale.

Revisiting Distributional Assumptions for Generalizability Studies of Count Data

Adam Lekwa, *Rutgers University*

Measures that produce counts of correct responses are commonplace in educational practice and research. Reliabilities of data produced by such measures are often studied in the context of Generalizability Theory. In this simulation study I revisit distributional assumptions in the estimation of variance components for count data in Generalizability Theory.

Building Educator Capacity with Reflection, Leadership Training & Adaptive Tech

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Maura Maxfield, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Chair: Jiwon Ban, *Boston College*

Longitudinal Study of K-12 Principal Leadership Coaching Perspectives: Balancing Immediate Needs with Long-Term Goals

Jenna Nichols, *University of Pennsylvania*

This study examines the changing dynamics of coach-principal dyads during a year-long coaching process for K-12 principals. Using interviews and phenomenological analysis, we examine how goals are set and addressed, how coach-principal relationships grow, and how coaches and principals drive professional and personal development in sessions.

Empowering Children by Expanding Teachers' Knowledge of Adaptive and Assistive Technologies

Johanna Kerrigan, Joy Dangora Erickson & Jennifer Flewelling, *Endicott College*

This capstone explores teacher perceptions of adaptive technology (AT) in learning. Through educator surveys, it identifies gaps in AT understanding and integration. Findings informed a professional development module equipping teachers with practical, inclusive strategies to use AT effectively, promoting equity, innovation, and support for all learners.

Enhancing Reflection and Future Growth Through Collaborative Debriefing

Kaitlin Donahue, Jacquelynne Anne Boivin & Shawn O'Neill, *Bridgewater State University*

This paper is focused on the value of structured, shared debriefing for undergraduate teacher candidates. It supports the Elementary and Early Childhood Education Program's "cluster" model

Cultivating Teacher Leaders: A Study of Strategy Design and Professional Development

Samuel Fancera, *William Paterson University*

This study explores strategies to enhance teacher leadership and the design of professional development modules to support their implementation. Drawing on qualitative and quantitative data from school leaders and teacher leaders, findings highlight key practices to foster leadership and collaboration. Results inform scalable, school-based approaches to teacher leadership.

FRIDAY, OCT 24
DAY 3

NERA

10:15 - 11:45

Boston-Concord

Building Educator Capacity with Reflection, Leadership Training & Adaptive Tech

THEME-BASED PAPER SESSION / SYMPOSIUM

Discussant: Wes DeSantis, *Ridgefield Public Schools*

Chair: Marcia A. B. Delcourt, *Western Connecticut State University*

Presenters: Marcia Delcourt, Katie O'Callaghan, *Western Connecticut State University*; Wes DeSantis, *Ridgefield Public Schools, Ridgefield, CT*; Aura Lippincott, Dylan Sprague, *Western Connecticut State University*

Educators are harnessing the power of AI at all academic levels. This tool compels us to revise our expectations regarding technology, as we create curriculum; explore teaching strategies; evaluate programs; as well as search for better ways to locate resources and express ourselves. This session describes each of these pursuits.

10:15 - 11:45

Augusta

Early Measures of Success of the Sankofa Scholars Undergraduate Research Program to Increase College

THEME-BASED PAPER SESSION / SYMPOSIUM

Discussant: Detris Adelabu, *Boston University*

Chair: Jerry Whitmore Jr., *Boston University*

Early Measures of Success of the Sankofa Scholars Undergraduate Research Program to Increase College Success

Detris Adelabu, Jerry Whitmore Jr., K'Nadja Sims, Mya Kelly, Jon Sibley, Dayanah Belcher, Jose Cruz & Jamila Rodriguez
Boston University

The Boston University Sankofa Scholars Undergraduate Research Program aims to increase persistence and graduate admissions for first generation undergraduates who engage in research to promote equity in education and related fields. The program demonstrates promising success related to student persistence, academic identity, and research interests and engagement.

10:15 - 11:45

Hartford

The Expanding Role of AI in Assessment, Leadership & Knowledge Production

(Sessions details continued on next page)

INDIVIDUAL PAPER SESSION

Discussant: Sophie Barnes, *Yale University*

Chair: Jungwon Kyung, *University of Massachusetts Amherst*

Educational Leader AI Readiness: Cultivating Acceptance for Future-Ready Classrooms

Jess Gregory, *Southern Connecticut State University*

This study assessed whether AI literacy shifted educator attitudes toward AI use, employing the TAM. By embedding AI tools and explicit instruction, it investigated changes in perceived usefulness, ease of use, and overall acceptance. The goal was to cultivate AI-ready leaders, ensuring equitable, future-ready learning for every mind.

Beyond the Classroom: Harnessing AI to Assess Disability Discourse Among U.S. Political Leaders

Michael McCarthy & Christina Cipriano, *The Education Collaboratory at Yale, Yale Child Study Center*

This study uses AI to collect and score U.S. politicians' statements about people with disabilities. Using a four-point scale, from dehumanizing to affirming, we assess how rhetoric shapes stigma and education policy. Results are mapped live to support advocacy, public awareness, and civic accountability: <https://www.disabilitydiscoursematters.org/>

AI Knowledge and Test-Taking Effort: Examining Student Behavior in Low-Stakes Assessments

Jada Willse, Jonathan Henriques, Emma Puckett & Brian Leventhal, *James Madison University*

We explore the implications of generative AI use on low-stakes assessments in higher education. Analyzing student effort, performance, and behavior, we examine whether likely AI-assisted responses introduce construct-irrelevant variance. Findings contribute to ongoing discussions about assessment validity, student engagement and the evolving role of AI in education.

Between the Lines: Using AI to Analyze Language in Inclusive Practices Measures and Research Reporting

Michael McCarthy, Mallory Smith, Melissa Stoffers & Christina Cipriano, *The Education Collaboratory at Yale, Yale Child Study Center*

This study builds on a global review of tools used to measure inclusive education. Using AI-assisted discourse analysis, we examine how disability and inclusion are framed in both the measurement items and in how researchers report their findings and describe students with disabilities in their studies.

11:45

Ballroom

Farewell and To-Go Snacks