



The Promise of Public Education

Connecting Research, Policy,
and Practice in a New Era

The 18th Annual
Conference of the
Metropolitan Educational
Research Consortium

October 22, 2021

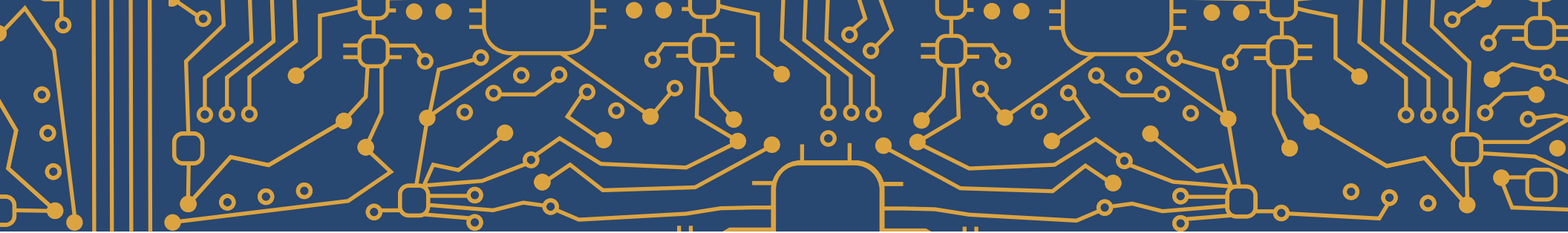


Held online on the Hopin.to platform



VCU

School of Education



ABOUT HOPIN.TO

HOPIN.TO is our online conference platform. Here is all the information you will need to get the most out of your day at the 2021 MERC Conference.



STAGE

This is where we will host our opening welcome session. Attendees can share questions and ideas in the chat feed.



SESSIONS

This year, the MERC Conference will feature 18 collaborative sessions across educational research, practice, and policy. In each session, you will hear from a collection of speakers discussing prominent and enduring topics in public education. You can share questions and ideas in the chat feed and request to share your audio and video during the Q&A. This is also where we will host our closing panel.



NETWORKING

Make the most of your time at the MERC Conference by connecting with stakeholders in public education across metropolitan Richmond! Hop in the networking room between sessions for a quick chat with someone new.



EXPO

Learn more about MERC research and resources as well as opportunities to engage with the VCU School of Education and MERC community.

Designed by:
Sarah Richardson
VCU Graphic Design

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ABOUT MERC

Celebrating 30 years of collaborative research in metropolitan Richmond.

OUR MISSION

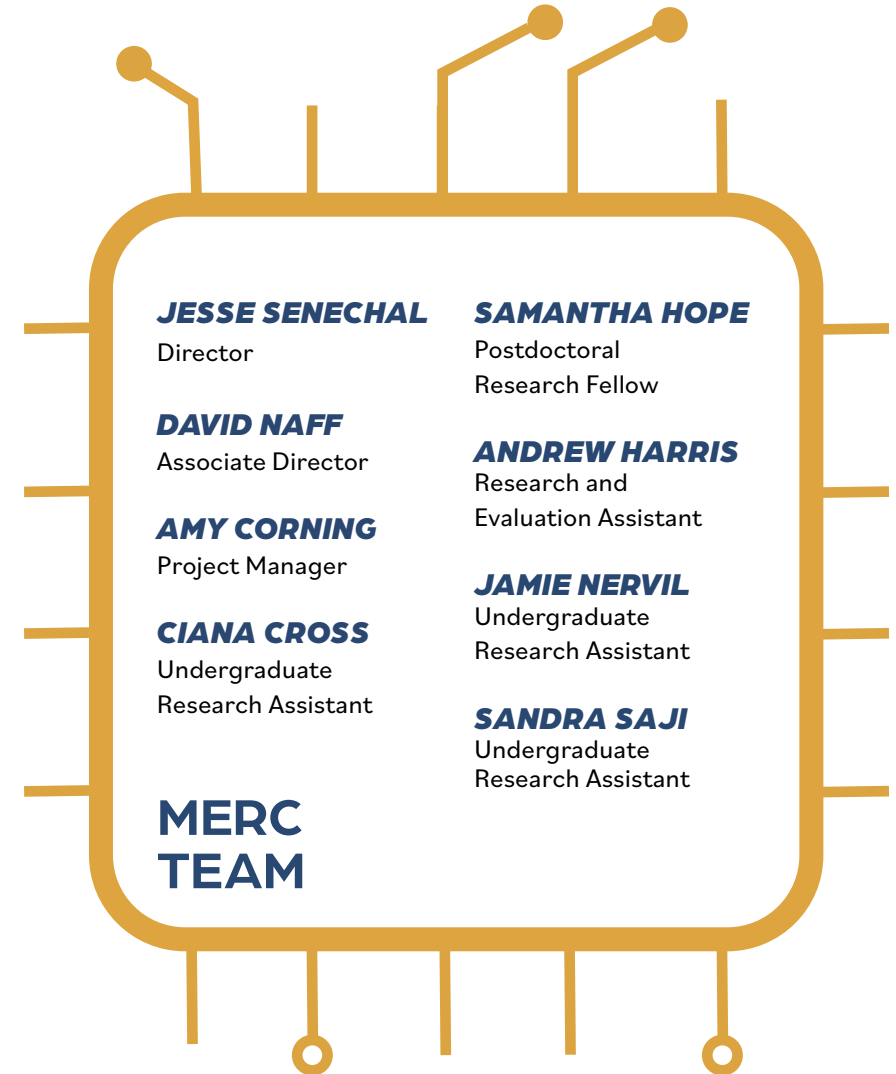
Established in 1991 as a partnership between Richmond area school divisions at the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University, the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium leads research that addresses enduring and emerging issues in PK12 education with the goal of informing policy, building the professional knowledge and skills of key stakeholders, contributing to the body of scholarly knowledge, and ultimately impacting outcomes relevant to students, schools, and communities.

OUR PRINCIPLES

- **Relevance:** Our work addresses topics in ways that are relevant to those engaged in PK12 policymaking and practice.
- **Impact:** The knowledge generated through our work is focused on its use and impact on policy and practice.
- **Rigor:** Our work is conducted in ways that reflect our rigor and quality in design and implementation.
- **Multiple Perspectives:** The relevance, impact, and rigor of our work are enhanced by engaging stakeholders that represent a range of experiences, perspectives, and knowledge bases.
- **Relationships:** The strength of our partnership relies on strong relationships between individuals, organizations, and communities that are characterized by communication and trust.

OUR GOALS

- Conduct and disseminate community-engaged research that has direct and indirect impacts on critical youth, school, and community outcomes.
- Develop the research knowledge and research capacity of school division personnel and university research partners through collaborations involving professional development.
- Build community and social networks between VCU units, school divisions, researchers, policy makers, and practitioners.
- Contribute to the local, state, and national policy and scholarly dialogue on education.
- Secure funding that supports the work of the partnership and builds the capacity of MERC to fulfill its mission.



To learn more about MERC visit our website: www.merc.soe.vcu.edu

POLICY & PLANNING COUNCIL

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Merv Daugherty, Superintendent
Thomas Taylor, Chief of Staff
Sharon Pope, Chief Academic Officer
Patty Fox, Coordinator of Research and Evaluation
Kathryn Haines, School Board Member

GOOCHLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jeremy Raley, Superintendent
Stephen Geyer, Assistant Superintendent of Instruction
Andrew Armstrong, Executive Director for Business Operations
Stacey Rainbolt, Division Coordinator of Testing

HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Amy Cashwell, Superintendent
Beth Teigen, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Tiffany Hinton, Director of Research and Planning

RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Jason Kamras, Superintendent
Tracy Epp, Chief Academic Officer
Deanna Summerous, Instructional Assessment Analyst
Damia Thomas, Director of Academic Operations

HANOVER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Michel Gill, Superintendent
Jennifer Greif, Assistant Superintendent
Nancy Disharoon, Director of Accreditation and Accountability

PETERSBURG CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Maria Pitre-Martin, Superintendent, MERC Policy and Planning Chair
Gwendolyn Price, Director of Research, Testing, and Evaluation
Decardra Jackson, STEM Coordinator

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Andrew Daire, Dean
Kathy Rudasill, Professor and Associate Dean of Research and Faculty Development
Lisa Abrams, Associate Professor, Foundations

MERC SCHOOL DIVISIONS

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Schools: 64
Teachers: 4,500
Total Enrollment: 60,904
Superintendent: Dr. Merv Daugherty



HANOVER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Schools: 25
Teachers: 2,509
Total Enrollment: 16,769
Superintendent: Dr. Michael Gill



PETERSBURG CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Schools: 8
Teachers: 323
Total Enrollment: 4,075
Superintendent: Dr. Maria Pitre-Martin



GOOCHLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Schools: 5
Teachers: 290
Total Enrollment: 2,582
Superintendent: Dr. Jeremy Raley



HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Schools: 67
Teachers: 4,082
Total Enrollment: 48,982
Superintendent: Dr. Amy Cashwell



RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Schools: 44
Teachers: 2,100
Total Enrollment: 28,240
Superintendent: Jason Kamras



MISSION STATEMENTS

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The mission of the Virginia Department of Education is to lead and facilitate the development and implementation of a quality public education system that meets the needs of students and assists them in becoming educated, productive, responsible, and self-reliant citizens.

CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The mission of the Chesterfield County Public Schools is to work in partnership with students, families and the community to ensure that each student acquires the knowledge, skills and core values necessary to achieve personal success and to enrich the community.

GOOCHLAND COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

To maximize the potential of every learner.

HANOVER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

We are a student-centered, community-driven organization committed to providing all students with exceptional learning experiences in order to produce productive citizens. Prepare them to be confident, ethical,

HENRICO COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Henrico County Public Schools, an innovative leader in educational excellence, will actively engage our students in diverse educational, social, and civic learning experiences that inspire and empower them to become contributing citizens.

PETERSBURG CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

To create the climate and conditions for every child to succeed by providing a sustainable, coordinated system of supports and access.

RICHMOND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Richmond Public Schools will prepare our students to become successful, contributing members of society through innovative and compassionate learning communities.

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

We advance learning and knowledge through impactful research, teaching and engagement to provide our students, professionals and communities with the tools to create progressive change. We prepare and support professionals to lead change and inform social, economic, health and educational policy and practice.

2020 MERC CONFERENCE SPEAKERS

Abdel-hamid, Sara

Virginia Commonwealth University

Allsbrooks, Terrie W.

Petersburg City Public Schools

Ashburn, Rich

Henrico County Public Schools

Baber, Elizabeth

Chesterfield County Public Schools

Bae, Christine

Virginia Commonwealth University

Baker, Andrew

Henrico County Public Schools

Barrett, Jentry

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Becker, Jonathan

Virginia Commonwealth University

Billups, Sarah

Hanover County Public Schools

Braxton, Destini

Richmond Public Schools

Brooks, Jada

Virginia State University

Brucker, Vicky

Henrico County Public Schools

Cabrera, Lauren

Virginia Commonwealth University

Caratachea, Matthew

Goochland County Public Schools

Chen, Chin-Chih

Virginia Commonwealth University

Collins, Jan

Hanover County Public Schools

Corning, Amy

Virginia Commonwealth University

Darby, Jenna

Chesterfield County Public Schools

Daniels, Erica

Petersburg City Public Schools

Dauksys, Julie

Hanover County Public Schools

Davis, Rachel

Virginia Commonwealth University

Davis Hill, Missy

Chesterfield County Public Schools

Dawes, Sande

Virginia Commonwealth University

De Arment, Serra

Virginia Commonwealth University

Dossick, Alison

Virginia Commonwealth University

Drulis, Erin

Virginia Commonwealth University

Dye, Kasey

Virginia Commonwealth University

Edmondson, Elizabeth

Virginia Commonwealth University

Ekholm, Eric

Chesterfield County Public Schools

Eum, Jungwon

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Exum, Olivia

Goochland County Public Schools

Foster, Tracee

Richmond Public Schools

Fox, Patricia

Chesterfield County Public Schools

Fugate, Amber

Henrico County Public Schools

Gannon, Chris

Fairfax County Public Schools

Garries, Richard

Virginia Commonwealth University

Gladstone, Jessica

Virginia Commonwealth University

Goranson, Kume

CodeRVA Regional High School

Grillo, Monica

Virginia Commonwealth University

Henderson, Nicole

Henrico County Public Schools

Hinton, Tiffany

Henrico County Public Schools

Hoffman, Adria

Virginia Commonwealth University

Hope, Samantha

Virginia Commonwealth University

Jefferson, Amy

Virginia Commonwealth University

Jones, Amy

Hanover County Public Schools

Joo, Yuenjung

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Kelley, Jennifer

Petersburg City Public Schools

Kenup, Alma Z.

Henrico County Public Schools

Kier, Meredith

The College of William & Mary

Koenka, Alison C.

Virginia Commonwealth University

Lee, Leo

Fairfax County Public Schools

Lee, Sera

Virginia Commonwealth University

Liebler, Jason K.

Henrico County Public Schools

Littleton, Mike

Williamsburg James City County
Public Schools

Lozada, Fantasy

Virginia Commonwealth University

Lucas, Brandon-Lee

Virginia Commonwealth University

Lyn, Robyn

Virginia Commonwealth University

Massey, Hali

Virginia Commonwealth University

McKnight, Kim

Virginia Commonwealth University

Mustachio, John

CodeRVA Regional High School

Naff, David

Virginia Commonwealth University

Nicolai, Korinthia D.

Virginia Commonwealth University

Nuckols, Brooke

Virginia Commonwealth University

Nugent, Gwen
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

O'Carrol, Ashley
Henrico County Public Schools

Omeish, Ibrahim
Fairfax County Public Schools

Parent, Victoria
Chesterfield County Public Schools

Parkhouse, Hillary
Virginia Commonwealth University

Peskin, Alex
Goochland County Public Schools

Petrosky, Brandon
Henrico County Public Schools

Pitre-Martin, Maria
Petersburg City Public Schools

Preston, Melinda
Henrico County Public Schools

Reed, Joy
Henrico County Public Schools

Robnolt, Valerie
Virginia Commonwealth University

Rolander, Kate
Virginia Commonwealth University

Ross, Erica
Virginia Commonwealth University

Salem, Eeman
Chesterfield County Public Schools

Sealy, Martinique
Virginia Commonwealth University

Senechal, Jessie
Virginia Commonwealth University

Severson-Irby, Elizabeth
Virginia Commonwealth University

Shahbazi, Omeed
Fairfax County Public Schools

Shenker, Matt
Hanover, The Mindfulness Counselor

Shin, Sunny
Virginia Commonwealth University

Simmons, Jasmine
CodeRVA Regional High School

Smith, Brian
Henrico County Public Schools

Snow, Taylor
Henrico County Public Schools

Spain Jr., Charles
Petersburg City Public Schools

Stange, Michael
Chesterfield County Public Schools

Stevens, Robert
CodeRVA Regional High School

Stevens, Tiffany
Henrico County Public Schools

Stewart, Angela
Henrico County Public Schools

Taylor, Katie
Henrico County Public Schools

Thompkins, Krystal
Petersburg City Public Schools

Thompson, Amy
Hanover County Public Schools

Wallace, Margaret K.
Virginia Commonwealth University

Wallace, Ronald
Williamsburg James City County
Public Schools

Waller, LaTonya
Richmond Public Schools

Weather, Candice
Podium RVA

Williams, Shenita E.
Henrico County Public Schools

Willis, Peter
Chesterfield County Public Schools

Wilson, Emily
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Woodberry, Patricia
Richmond Public Schools

Wu Nelson, Dorothy
Virginia State University

Yeroian, Vicki
GLSEN Richmond & Podium RVA

Yeung, Melissa
Bowling Green State University



MERC STUDIES & STUDY TEAMS

ACTION RESEARCH TEAMS FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices forefront student culture in the development of curriculum and the delivery of instruction. Culturally responsive teachers view [students' cultural differences as assets in the learning process](#). Research suggests that when teachers are well-equipped to foster inclusive and equitable classrooms, students from marginalized backgrounds show higher rates of academic achievement, motivation, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. The [Action Research Teams for Culturally Responsive Teaching project](#) is funded by a Researcher-Practitioner Partnership grant from the [Institute of Education Sciences \(IES\)](#). This project includes the work of educators participating in a two-year grant-funded professional development program focused on CRT. The program currently engages teams in two high schools in Chesterfield County ([Monacan](#) and [Meadowbrook](#)) and two middle schools in Henrico County ([Quiocassin](#) and [Tuckahoe](#)).

For the program, the participating educators attended summer workshops in both the summer of 2019 and 2020 where they engaged in conversations about CRT, and developed plans for implementing CRT-based action research projects in their classrooms. During the school year, educators conduct cycles of action research (4 per year) that involve (1) planning and implementing a CRT practice, (2) collecting and reflecting on data related to student outcomes, and (3) planning for a new cycle. Each cycle lasts six to eight weeks. The school teams then meet after each research cycle to present and reflect upon their work and the work of their colleagues. At the end of the 19-20 school year, we hosted a showcase to profile the year one work of the teachers. A similar end-of-program showcase will happen at the end of the 20-21 school year. Learn more about the year one action research projects by viewing the [profiles of participating educators](#).

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS

Hillary Parkhouse - Department of Teaching and Learning, VCU; **Jesse Senechal** - MERC, VCU; **Fantasy Lozada** - Assistant Professor, Developmental Psychology, VCU; **Monica Manns** - Henrico County Public Schools; **Maia Johnson** - Chesterfield County Public Schools.

ACTION RESEARCHERS

Adrian Murray - Success Teacher, Monacan High School; Jenny Smith - English Language Arts Teacher, Quiocassin Middle School; Doug Beecher - In School Detention Monitor, Monacan High School; Amy Cotten - Math Teacher, Monacan High School; Kevin Socha - Dean of Students, Meadowbrook High School; Alissa Yazinski - Math Teacher, Monacan High School; David Glass - Sheltered World History Teacher, Meadowbrook High School; Caroline Altier - Special Education/Social Studies Teacher, Quiocassin Middle School; Thea Paul - Librarian, Meadowbrook High School; Brewster Brown - Counselor, Tuckahoe Middle School; Ricky Ellestad - Math Teacher, Monacan High School; Elizabeth Simmons - English Language Arts Teacher, Quiocassin Middle School; Shannon Macaulay - English Language Arts Teacher, Meadowbrook High School; Julie Cloninger - ESL/Sheltered Science, Meadowbrook High School; Meg Jacoby - English Language Arts Teacher, Monacan High School; Erin Daniel - Innovative Learning Coach, Quiocassin Middle School; Clarissa Adkins - English Language Arts, Meadowbrook High School; Adam White - Digital Art, Meadowbrook High School; Sarah Glass - ESL Teacher, Meadowbrook High School; Dana Billett - Social Studies Teacher, Tuckahoe Middle School; Elizabeth Murray - Social Studies Teacher, Tuckahoe Middle School; Alma Kenup - English Language Arts Teacher, Quiocassin Middle School; Heather Dawson - English Language Arts Teacher, Quiocassin Middle School; Vicky Brucker - English Language Arts Teacher, Quiocassin Middle School; Victoria Case - World Languages-Spanish Teacher, Quiocassin Middle School

TEACHER RETENTION

The MERC Policy and Planning Council selected teacher retention as a study topic in the spring of 2018. The 2017 Annual Report on the Condition and Needs of Public Schools in Virginia published by the Virginia Department of Education identified teacher recruitment and retention as one of the top priorities in the state, highlighting issues related to professional preparation, compensation, and school climate, among others as contributors to attrition. MERC's recent Understanding Teacher Morale study explored the factors that contribute to teacher turnover, but there is still opportunity to study the factors that lead teachers to stay in the profession, particularly in high-need environments.

This study has two phases. In phase one, researchers are collecting secondary data on the teacher workforce in metropolitan Richmond to understand patterns of teacher retention in our region. Phase one also includes the development of a survey to be sent to all teachers in the MERC region asking about their morale and work experiences. Phase two will be a policy analysis using phase one data to evaluate existing state and division policies designed to address teacher retention. Learn more about this study in session 18 (3:00-4:00).

RESEARCH TEAM

Joan Rhodes - Co-Principal Investigator, Department of Teaching and Learning, VCU; **Elizabeth Edmondson** - Co-Principal Investigator, Department of Teaching and Learning, VCU; **Jon Becker** - Co-Principal Investigator, Department of Educational Leadership, VCU; **Adria Hoffman** - Co-Principal Investigator, Department of Teaching and Learning, VCU; **Andrene Castro**, Co-Principal Investigator, Department of Teaching and Learning, VCU; **Val Robnolt** - Co-Principal Investigator, Department of Teaching and Learning, VCU; **Jesse Senechal** - Co-Principal Investigator, MERC, VCU; **David Naff** - Co-Principal Investigator, MERC, VCU; **Angela Allen** - Graduate Research Assistant, Urban Services Leadership, VCU; **Brooke Good** - Graduate Research Assistant, Curriculum, Culture, and Change, VCU

STUDY TEAM

Bruce Fillman - Principal, Hening Elementary, Chesterfield; **Jason Buck** - Human Resources Representative, Chesterfield; **Denise Bowes** - Assistant Principal, Midlothian High School, Chesterfield; **Vinny Neffinger** - Assistant Director of Recruitment, Chesterfield; **Andy Armstrong** - Executive Director for Business Operations, Goochland; **Tina McCay** - Principal, Goochland Elementary, Goochland; **Allison Fleming** - Senior Teacher, Patrick Henry High; **Ann Wallace** - Teacher, Pearsons Corner Elementary School; **Angela Stewart** - Staff Development Specialist, Henrico; **Leah Wiedenhoft** - Assistant Principal, Glen Allen High School, Henrico; **Jess Burbic** - Associate Principal, Godwin High School, Henrico; **Crystal Goode** - Talent Manager, Human Resources, Petersburg; **Darlene Currie** - Director of Professional Development, Richmond; **Helen Demena** - Manager of Talent Acquisition, Human Resources - Richmond

EQUITABLE ACCESS AND SUPPORT FOR ADVANCED COURSEWORK

Commissioned by the Policy and Planning Council in December of 2019, this multi-phase, mixed-methods study focuses on racial and socioeconomic equity in the provision of advanced coursework in the MERC region. This includes gifted and talented programs in elementary school, algebra I in middle school, and Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), dual enrollment, and honors courses in high school. Phase one of this study includes a secondary data analysis of student course taking and performance patterns over the past decade in metropolitan Richmond schools as well as an analysis of federal, state, and division level policies guiding the delivery of advanced coursework. Phase two of this study includes a survey of middle and high school students throughout the MERC region about their decision-making processes for enrolling (or not enrolling) in advanced courses, including their perceptions of barriers and supports. It also includes a multiple case study exploring promising practices in elementary, middle, and high schools in the MERC region who are promoting racial and socioeconomic equity in advanced coursework enrollment.

Throughout this study, researchers will release literature reviews related to equity in gifted and talented programs in elementary school, algebra I in middle school, and AP courses in high school, along with findings from phase one and phase two. Learn more about this study in session 15 (1:50-2:50).

RESEARCH TEAM

Chin-Chih Chen - Principal Investigator, Associate Professor of Counseling and Special Education; **Tomika Ferguson** - Principal Investigator, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership; **Alison Koenka** - Principal Investigator, Assistant Professor of Foundations of Education; **David Naff** - Principal Investigator, MERC Assistant Director/Assistant Professor of Foundations of Education; **George Hewan** - Co-Principal Investigator, Adjunct Faculty in Counseling and Special Education; **Jenna Lenhardt** - Co-Principal Investigator, VCU SOE Dean's Office; **Genevieve Siegel-Hawley** - Co-Principal Investigator - Associate Professor of Educational Leadership; **Andrew Wojcik** - Co-Principal Investigator, Assistant Professor, Kings College; **Elizabeth Baber** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership; **Dani Berry** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Psychology; **Bob Craig** - Graduate Research Assistant, Adult Learning and Urban Leadership; **Chris Cannon** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership EdD Program; **Jan Gay** - Graduate Research Assistant, Counselor Education (University of Florida); **Amy Jefferson** - Graduate Research Assistant, Curriculum, Culture, and Change; **Isaac Man** - Graduate Research Assistant, Counselor Education; **Isaiah Moore** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership, Policy, and Justice; **Kori Nicolai** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Psychology; **Virginia Palencia** - Graduate Research Assistant, Curriculum, Culture, and Change; **Mitch Parry** - Research Assistant, Educational Leadership; **Chris Parthemos** - Graduate Research Assistant, Research, Assessment, and Evaluation; **Dana Rahbar-Daniels** - Graduate Research Assistant, Adult Learning and Urban Leadership; **Kristian Robinson** - Graduate Research Assistant, Counselor Education; **Erica Ross** - Graduate Research Assistant, Research, Assessment, and Evaluation; **Brooke Taylor** - Graduate Research Assistant, Curriculum, Culture and Change; **Elisa Tedona** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership; **Christina Tillery** - Graduate Research Assistant, Counselor Education; **Pete Willis** - Graduate Research Assistant, Curriculum, Culture, and Change; **Jeffrey Wooten** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Research, Policy, and Justice; **Teddy Stripling** - Research Assistant, University of Chicago Lab School; **Sandra Saji** - Undergraduate Research Assistant; **Ciana Cross** - Undergraduate Research Assistant

STUDY TEAM

Morgan Saxby - Teacher, Robious Elementary School, Chesterfield; **Adrienne Blanton** - Principal, L.C. Bird High School, Chesterfield; **Antionette Stroter** - Research and Evaluation Specialist, Chesterfield; **Carolyn Waters** - EL Teacher, ESL Teacher at Falling Creek Middle School, Chesterfield; **Beth Fowler** - Advanced Programs and Equity Specialist, Goochland; **Olivia Exum** - AP Spanish Teacher at Goochland High School, Goochland; **Andy Armstrong** - Assistant Superintendent of Business Operations, Goochland; **Tyrontay Nichols** - English Teacher, Patrick Henry High School, Hanover; **Emily Garcia** - Counselor at Lee Davis High School, Hanover; **Connie Foreman** - School Board Office, Hanover; **Ingrid Grant** - Chief of School Leadership, Henrico; **John Marshall** - Principal of Douglas Freeman High School, Henrico; **Greg Lyndaker** - History Teacher at Henrico High School, Henrico; **Gwen Price** - Director of Research, Testing, and Evaluation, Petersburg; **Decandra Jackson** - STEM Coordinator, Petersburg; **Tanja Atkins-Nelson** - Principal of Flat Rock Elementary School, Powhatan; **Xenia Cornick** - Division School Social Worker, Powhatan; **Candace Veney-Chapin** - Manager of College and Career Pathways, Richmond; **Camilla Battle** - Counselor at John Marshall High School, Richmond; **Laura Faulcon** - Manager of Alternative Education, Richmond; **Carmen Ward** - Director of Counseling at Armstrong High School, Richmond

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH IN SCHOOLS

Commissioned by the MERC Policy and Planning Council in the spring of 2021, this new MERC study will explore how schools provide mental health support to students and staff, with particular attention to how schools have responded to addressing mental health needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research design for this study will be approved in March of 2022, followed by data collection, analysis, and reporting.

RESEARCH TEAM

Chin-Chih Chen - Principal Investigator, Associate Professor of Counseling and Special Education; **Misti Mueller** - Principal Investigator, Assistant Professor of Teaching and Learning; **David Naff** - Principal Investigator, MERC Associate Director/Assistant Professor of Foundations of Education; **Jodie Soracco** - Principal Investigator, Director, VTSS-RIC; **Patrice Beard** - Co-Principal Investigator, Mental Health and Data Integration Specialist; **Clarence Collins** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership EdD Program, K-12; **Pamela Crook** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership, Policy, and Justice; **La Toya Draper** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership EdD Program, K-12; **Suzanne Hart** - Graduate Research Assistant, Counselor Education; **Kris Herakovich-Curtis** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership EdD Program, K-12; **Sherol Southerland** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Psychology; **Erin Sturgis** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership EdD Program, K-12; **Betsy Thomas** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Leadership EdD Program, K-12; **Maggie Wallace** - Graduate Research Assistant, Educational Psychology; **Pete Willis** - Research Assistant

STUDY TEAM

Amirah Bohler - Counselor at Meadowbrook High School, Chesterfield; **Laura Early** - Coordinator, Chesterfield; **Patty Fox** - Coordinator of Research and Evaluation, Chesterfield; **Julie Pickels** - School Social Worker, Chesterfield; **Sarah Ambrose** - Counselor at Randolph Elementary School, Goochland; **Allison Mears** - Mental Health Counselor, Goochland; **Britney Carr** - Secondary School Counselor at Hanover Online School, Hanover; **Kristen Stubbe** - Counselor at Mechanicsville Elementary School, Hanover; **Donyetta Bryson** - School Psychologist, Henrico; **Amy Johnson** - Student Support and Wellness Specialist, Henrico; **Elizabeth Parker** - Director of School Counseling, Henrico; **Christina Vitek** - Director of Psychological Services, Henrico; **Erica Daniels** - Counselor, Vernon Johns Middle School, Petersburg; **Alex Javna** - School Social Worker, Petersburg

ENGLISH LEARNER RESEARCH AND EVALUATION TEAM

Since the spring of 2017, VCU SOE faculty members and doctoral students with expertise in English learner (EL) evidence-based practices, policies, and research have been working together to disseminate scholarly information and create a bridge between research, policy, and practice. Learn more from this team in session 6 (10:20-11:20), session 9 (11:30-12:30), and session 19 (3:00-4:00).

RESEARCH TEAM

Jesse Senechal - MERC Director; **Hillary Parkhouse** - Department of Teaching and Learning, VCU; **Carolyn Waters** - EL Teacher, Chesterfield; **Kate Daly Rolander** - Workforce Education Specialist at the Literacy Institute, VCU; **Virginia Massaro** - Lecturer in the Department of Teaching and Learning, ODU; **Virginia Palencia** - PhD Candidate in Educational Leadership, Policy, and Justice (VCU); **Andrew Harris** - MERC Undergraduate Research Assistant, VCU

SCHEDULE

PLAN YOUR DAY FOR THE 2021 MERC CONFERENCE

WELCOME 8:30–9:00

Kathleen Rudasill (Senior Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Affairs, VCU School of Education), Maria Pitre-Martin (Superintendent of Petersburg City Public Schools and MERC Chair), Jesse Senechal (MERC Director), and David Naff (MERC Assistant Director of Research and Evaluation) offer opening remarks for the 2021 MERC Conference

BREAKOUT ONE 9:10–10:10

Session 1: Profiles in Adapting Postsecondary Instruction During Covid-19

Session 2: Teaching with Social Justice in Mind

Session 3: Strategies for Promoting Teacher Leadership

BREAKOUT TWO 10:20–11:20

Session 4: Research-Based Approaches to Expanding Access and Success in Advanced Coursework Across K-12

Session 5: Strategies for Developing Research Partnerships to Guide Practice

Session 6: Supporting Teachers in High-Poverty Schools

BREAKOUT THREE 11:30–12:30

Session 7: Promoting Equitable Academic Opportunity from Kindergarten to College

Session 8: Action Research to Develop Teacher Leaders

Session 9: Considering Context and Culture in Student Support Services

BREAKOUT FOUR 12:40–1:40

Session 10: Leveraging Researcher-Practitioner for Evidence-Based Decision Making

Session 11: Holistic Approaches to Supporting New Teachers

Session 12: Promoting Student Voice in Critical Conversations

BREAKOUT FIVE 1:50–2:50

Session 13: Will They Stay or Will They Go? Lessons Learned From the MERC Teacher Retention Study

Session 14: Supporting Student Mental Health in Challenging Times

BREAKOUT SIX 3:00–4:00

Session 15: Advancing STEM Education in a New Era

Session 16: Supporting Marginalized Student Populations

Session 17: Data-Driven Practices to Support Student Success

CLOSING PANEL 4:10–5:30

Matt Caratachea (Coordinator of Technology Integration and Innovation, Goochland County Public Schools), Erica Daniels (School Counselor at Vernon Johns Middle School, Petersburg City Public Schools), Serra De Arment (Assistant Professor, Counseling and Special Education, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Education), Sera Lee (Second Year Pharmacy Student, Virginia Commonwealth University), Alex Peskin (Junior at Goochland High School, Goochland County Public Schools), Patricia Woodberry (Gifted and Talented Teacher, Richmond Public Schools), Victoria Parent (Moderator) (English Teacher at Monacan High School, Chesterfield County Public Schools), and Alma Kenup (Moderator) (English Teacher at Quiocasin Middle School, Henrico County Public Schools)

SESSION THREADS

Sessions at the 2021 MERC Conference are organized according to 7 “threads” to indicate the type of content covered in the presentation. These threads are aligned with our conference theme “Promise of Public Education:”intended to help you plan your day at the conference.

PROMISING ACCESS

Breakout 2 (Session 4): Research-Based Approaches to Expanding Access and Success in Advanced Coursework Across K-12

Breakout 3 (Session 7): Promoting Equitable Academic Opportunity from Kindergarten to College

Breakout 6 (Session 15): Advancing STEM Education in a New Era

PROMISING EQUITY STRATEGIES

Breakout 1 (Session 2): Teaching with Social Justice in Mind

Breakout 4 (Session 12): Promoting Student Voice in Critical Conversations

Breakout 6 (Session 16): Supporting Marginalized Student Populations

PROMISING PARTNERSHIPS

Breakout 2 (Session 5): Strategies for Developing Research Partnerships to Guide Practice

Breakout 4 (Session 10): Leveraging Researcher-Practitioner Partnerships for Evidence-Based Decision Making

PROMISING RETENTION STRATEGIES

Breakout 2 (Session 6): Supporting Teachers in High-Poverty Schools

Breakout 5 (Session 13): Will They Stay or Will They Go? Lessons Learned from the MERC Teacher Retention Study

PROMISING STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Breakout 1 (Session 1): Profiles in Adapting Postsecondary Instruction During COVID-19

Breakout 6 (Session 17): Data-Driven Practices to Support Student Success

PROMISING STUDENT WELLBEING

Breakout 3 (Session 9): Considering Context and Culture in Student Support Services

Breakout 5 (Session 14): Supporting Student Mental Health in Challenging Times

PROMISING TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

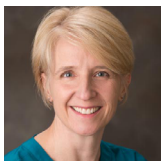
Breakout 1 (Session 3): Strategies for Promoting Teacher Leadership

Breakout 3 (Session 8): Action Research to Develop Teacher Leaders

Breakout 4 (Session 11): Holistic Approaches to Supporting New Teachers

WELCOME

8:30–9:00 TO THE 2021 MERC CONFERENCE!



Kathleen Rudasill is the Senior Associate Dean for Research and Faculty Affairs in the School of Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. She has served in this role since 2018 and serves on the MERC Policy and Planning Council.

KATHLEEN RUDASILL



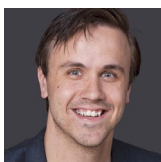
Maria Pitre-Martin is the Superintendent of Petersburg City Public Schools. She has served in this role since 2019 and serves as the Chair of the MERC Policy and Planning Council.

MARIA PITRE-MARTIN



Jesse Senechal is the Director of the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium (MERC). He has worked with MERC since 2009.

JESSE SENECHAL



David Naff is the Associate Director of MERC. He has worked with MERC since 2015.

DAVID NAFF

BREAKOUT ONE

9:10–10:10

SESSION 1: PROFILES IN ADAPTING POSTSECONDARY INSTRUCTION DURING COVID-19

Thread: Promising Student Support Systems

● Pandemic and Beyond: An Instructor's Innovative Approach to Online Teaching

Dorothy Nelson (VSU)

The global pandemic radically changed education overnight. Pivoting to a virtual learning environment had its challenges for instructors, but they quickly adapted with innovative teaching practices. This presentation discusses an engaging semester-long project that was assigned in lieu of planning a live event in a fashion promotion course.

Takeaways

- Though the pandemic forced educators to switch to online teaching overnight, they have quickly adapted to and achieved online success and promising outcomes by using innovative teaching practices.
- Successful student engagement requires considering student desires and interests and incorporating them into the learning material.
- Create projects and assignments that can be easily adapted from face-to-face to online/hybrid learning environments.

● Lessons Learned from Racial Injustice and the Covid-19 Pandemic While Teaching Human Development to Preservice Educators: Evidence-based Practices

Korinthia D. Nicolai (VCU), Alison C. Koenka, (VCU), Richard Garries, (VCU)

This session will discuss strategies for instructors to foster inclusion in their courses. We will organize our recommendations into three categories: curriculum content, exams and assignments, and leading engaging discussions. These strategies are based upon our experiences in a Human Development and Learning course during 2020.

Takeaways

- Curriculum Content: Tangible strategies to acknowledge the lack of inclusion that is often found in textbooks, theories, and research and how to honor diversity.
- Exams and Assignments: Tangible strategies for rethinking assessment to better support all of our students.
- Leading Engaging Discussions: Tangible strategies for engaging students and creating an engaging learning environment.

SESSION 2: TEACHING WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE IN MIND

Thread: Promising Equity Strategies

Teaching Social Justice in an English/Language Arts Classroom

Alma Z Kenup (Henrico), Vicky Brucker (Henrico)

Two middle school teachers share lessons on designing and executing a curriculum featuring social justice. Hear stories about roadblocks, near-misses and successes in creating engaging student-centered lessons that weave in students interests around representation, antiracism, environmental justice and history-making events

Takeaways

- Collaboration is key when designing instruction on issues that may be deemed controversial. Someone somewhere has done this work before.
- Before considering teaching about injustices, do the work yourself first. Understand your background, bias and know where you have more to learn.
- Get student input and feedback about instruction.

Teaching for Social Justice: Supporting Pre-service Science and Mathematics Teachers to Grow From Awareness to Advocacy

Monica Grillo (VCU), Meredith Kier (W&M)

Prior to this roundtable discussion, we encourage participants to bring successful activities that they have used with preservice mathematics and science teachers to be advocates for equity in high-poverty schools. We will begin the discussion by introducing our context, including the nature of our preparation experiences and characteristics of preservice teachers at our university. We seek to present key assignments in this course and the predominant themes that emerged activities through. We will ask participants to consider a successful activity, course, or programmatic experience that has supported equitable teaching in STEM. We will ask them to share descriptions of these activities as well as what teacher educators need to be aware of when facilitating. Facilitators and participants will share syllabi, readings, and assignments in a shared drive accessible for all.

Takeaways

- This roundtable has the potential to bring teacher educators together to share activities and research for developing the readiness of preservice mathematics and science teachers to serve diverse populations.
- We also welcome science and mathematics teachers in the field to offer feedback on program structures, course designs, and class assignments.
- This opportunity to network and share ideas can lead to research opportunities, such as an NSF Noyce proposal where educators can compare the effectiveness of teacher preparation across states.

SESSION 3: STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Thread: Promising Teacher Development

Support Teacher Led Learning Through PLC and Teacher Teams

Andrew Baker (Henrico), Brian Smith (Henrico), Ashley O'Carrol (Henrico), Jason K. Liebler (Henrico)

This session will share resources, research, and strategies used in Henrico County Schools to support teacher to teacher learning in over seventy schools by focusing on teacher-leader training to build skillsets in educators to effectively lead PLCs and teacher teams to support student learning and motivation.

Takeaways

- Resources and frameworks supporting teacher-led learning in schools
- Research behind the efficacy and importance of school-based PLCs and teacher teams.
- Methods for bridging the research-to-practice gap in public schools

Interdisciplinary Collaborative Leadership Leads to Teacher and Student Excellence

Sarah Billups (Hanover), Jan Collins (Hanover), Amy Jones (Hanover)

In order to increase teacher and student excellence we first need to look at our ability as leaders to collaborate. We have developed a strong collaborative relationship between Math, English and Language Arts, and Special Education in Hanover County. We are working as an interdisciplinary team to better impact teachers and students and increase our daily impact.

Takeaways

- The importance of leadership working collaboratively at the division level.
- The importance of general education and special education instructional leaders collaborating.
- The impact of multidisciplinary instructional walkthroughs.



BREAKOUT TWO

10:20–11:20

SESSION 4: RESEARCH-BASED APPROACHES TO EXPANDING ACCESS AND SUCCESS IN ADVANCED COURSEWORK ACROSS K–12

Thread: Promising Access

(MERC Research) Developing Equitable Gifted Programs in Title I Settings Using Evidence-Based Practices

David Naff (VCU), Rich Ashburn (Henrico), Amy Jefferson (VCU)

Research has persistently demonstrated racial and socioeconomic disparities in gifted education. But how does this evidence inform more equitable practice in classrooms? In this presentation, MERC researchers will share research and strategies to promote equity gifted and talented programs. Then a Gifted Resource Teacher working in Title I schools will share how this research helped launch a new initiative in his division.

Takeaways

- Participants will learn about the landscape of racial and socioeconomic disparities in gifted education programs, nationally and in Virginia.
- Participants will gain knowledge about strategies for promoting greater equity in gifted education, including a conceptual shift towards talent development.
- Participants will hear local examples of how to implement educational research into practice to promote greater equity in advanced coursework.

(MERC Research) Analyzing Advanced Placement (AP): Making the Nation's Most Prominent College Preparatory Program More Equitable

David Naff (VCU), Chris Gannon (Fairfax), Olivia Exum (Goochland)

This presentation will share research and trends in the Advanced Placement (AP) program, including historical and enduring inequities in participation and performance and strategies for addressing them. It will also feature testimonials from AP teachers and students in central Virginia.

Takeaways

- Participants will learn about historical trends in AP course taking and performance
- Participants will learn about disparities in AP course taking and school and policy level contributors to inequities
- Participants will learn practical strategies for promoting greater equity in AP programs

SESSION 5: STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS TO GUIDE PRACTICE

Thread: Promising Partnerships

Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice: Developing University-School Partnerships with a Dual Identity

Destini Braxton (RPS), Alison Koenka (VCU), LaTonya Waller (RPS), Korinthia Nicolai (VCU)

As educational systems continue to evolve, it is essential for researchers to continue bridging the gap between theory and practice. This presentation will discuss developing university-school partnerships, looking closely at individuals with dual research and educator identities, as one of many possible solutions.

Takeaways

- Cast a spotlight on the benefits and experiences of developing school partnerships from an educator and researcher perspective
- Provide tips on how to develop school partnerships as a part-time doctoral student.
- Provide recommendations for providing mentorship and professional support to students who identify as both an educator and researcher.

(MERC Research) Picture of Practice Revealed: Unpacking a Researcher-Practitioner Partnership

Margaret K. Wallace (VCU), Kasey Dye (VCU), Sande Dawes (VCU), Krystal Thompkins (Petersburg), Dr. Maria Pitre-Martin (Petersburg)

Join us as we unpack the Petersburg Partnership and consider lessons-learned through a collaboration that prioritizes mutualism and shared values with the purpose of growing instructional best practices and student thinking. The team will share pictures of practice and provide attendees with resources for initiating and replicating their own partnership.

Takeaways

- Collaborative partnerships that honor mutualism and shared values, cultivate a positive learning climate that supports the growth of instructional best practices and student thinking and learning.
- The following are key factors in establishing a successful researcher-practitioner partnership: (a) establishing trusting relationships (b) cultivating a shared language between partners and an understanding that this work is for the mutual benefit of students, in addition to (c) learning from and with each other throughout the partnership.
- The Petersburg Partnership will provide a living dashboard for conference participants to engage with during and following the presentation. This dashboard includes pictures of practice, testimonials from team members and resources for conducting this work. This is a learning space that invites connection and learning for all education stakeholders.

BREAKOUT THREE

11:30–12:30

SESSION 6: SUPPORTING TEACHERS IN HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS

Thread: Promising Retention Strategies

Identity and Contextual Factors Influencing Retention of Science and Mathematics Teachers in High-Need Schools

Monica Grillo (VCU), Meredith Kier (W&M)

Using a digital storyboard and spoken narrative, participants will explore and process the narratives of three different typologies of science and mathematics teachers who remain committed to teaching in HNSs beyond their scholarship obligation years. In our research, we designed the interview of nine Noyce Scholarship Program alumni chronologically: early experiences that led them to teach, experiences in their career that shaped their commitment, and their future plans in HNSs. Teacher educators in attendance will follow the lived experiences of our research participants. We will facilitate participant discussion at each juncture, encouraging them to reflect on the lived experiences of science and mathematics teachers who remain committed to teaching in HNSs and how these narratives can inform their ideas of what is needed in the field, organizationally and from a leadership perspective.

Takeaways

- Our session participants will return to their spheres of influence well-positioned to include opportunities for pre-service and in-service teachers to develop their professional identities as researchers and social justice advocates.
- This may include engaging teachers and candidates in professional development, engaging in iterative action research, practicing culturally responsive approaches, and navigating scenarios of political and student-related challenges.
- Our research findings which we hope to present have implications for higher education, school districts, and PK-20 educators.

Reflections from RTR in Petersburg: R-Relationships, T- Trust, and R-Results

Kim McKnight (VCU), Jennifer Kelley (Petersburg)

With 100% retention of all RTR-Petersburg graduates, the principal of Cool Spring Elementary and the RTR Executive Director reflect on what has led to this success.

Takeaways

- Focus on the relationships at every level- district, university, school, and classroom to have successful partnerships
- Building trust and having open lines of communication are critically important to new partnerships
- Strong results only happen with consistent focus on reflective practice, relationships, and trust in the process and the people

SESSION 7: PROMOTING EQUITABLE ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITY FROM KINDERGARTEN TO COLLEGE

Thread: Promising Access

(MERC Research) Exploring Trends, Patterns, and Disparities in Advanced Course Taking in the MERC Region

Erica Ross (VCU), Chin- Chi Chen (VCU), David Naff (VCU), Brandon- Lee Lucas, (VCU)

This project uses the Virginia Longitudinal Data System (VLDS) to explore who receives gifted and talented services in elementary school and takes advanced courses in middle and high school in the MERC region. This includes an analysis of how advanced course taking varies by race, socioeconomic status, gender, disability status, and English Learner status as well as division and school characteristics.

Takeaways

- Understanding the landscape of advanced course taking and performance patterns in metropolitan Richmond schools
- Exploring disparities in advanced course taking and performance based on student demographics
- Understanding how school and division demographics relates to advanced course taking and performance patterns

The Diploma Plus Initiative.... It's Not a Linear Thing. Let Me Explain.

Terrie W. Allsbrooks (Petersburg), Charles Spain Jr. (Petersburg)

The Diploma Plus Initiative (DPI) is grounded in increasing access to high-demand, high-wage careers, addressing barriers to postsecondary success, building pipelines to local workforce development, and leading to financial security for our students.

Takeaways

- Develop an understanding of the framework used to guide Diploma Plus
- Understand the data/research used to guide Diploma Plus
- Understand the accountability measures and next steps needed to sustain DPI.



● The Role of Faculty in Recruiting Students at a Historically Black College

Dorothy Wu Nelson (VSU), Jada Brooks (VSU)

Family and Consumer Science (FACS), formerly known as Home Economics, has been invaluable to students in public schools nationwide for many decades. In recent years, there has been a great need for educators and professionals in the field. This presentation will focus on recruiting students into a university Family and Consumer Science Program at an HBCU.

Takeaways

- Participants will gain an understanding of a Family and Consumer Science program at a Historically Black College.
- Participants will examine recruitment strategies.
- Key recruitment goals will be reviewed to include student growth, the importance of maintaining enrollment of new and established students, and increasing graduation rates.

SESSION 8: ACTION RESEARCH TO DEVELOP TEACHER LEADERS

Thread: Promising Teacher Development

● Elevating Teaching Leaders through Action Research

*Andrew Baker (Henrico), Angela Stewart (Henrico) Melinda Preston (Henrico)
Tiffany Stevens (Henrico), Amber Fugate (Henrico)*

In this session, participants will learn about how Henrico Schools supports teacher-leaders in year-long action research cohorts allowing them to drive their own professional learning through guided inquiry and instructional experimentation. Not only will the processes and resources be shared and used in the facilitation of these cohorts, participants will join a mini research poster session hosted by the teacher leaders themselves.

Takeaways

- A model for facilitating learning through action-research in a public school division
- The experiences of real teachers who have completed action research projects
- An opportunity to connect with regional partners interested in supporting or helping with action research in Central Virginia

● (MERC Research) Developing Culturally Responsive Teachers: Reflections on a Two Year Action Research Program

Jesse Senechal (VCU), Fantasy Lozada (VCU), Hillary Parkhouse (VCU), Robyn Lyn (VCU), Rachel Davis (VCU), Erin Drulis (VCU), Elizabeth Severson-Irby (VCU)

ARTCRT (Action Research Teams for Culturally Responsive Teaching) was a two-year professional development program that worked with middle and high school teachers from the MERC region. In this session, leaders and participants in the program will share reflections about the program and about the promise and potential of culturally responsive education models.

Takeaways

- Attendees will gain a better understanding of the framework of culturally responsive teaching.
- Attendees will learn about current resources for culturally responsive teaching.
- Attendees will have opportunities for discussion and networking with other educational stakeholders interested in culturally responsive teaching.

SESSION 9: CONSIDERING CONTEXT AND CULTURE IN STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Thread: Promising Student Wellbeing

● When We Do It for the Culture-The intentional Centering of Blackness in School-Based Mental Health Systems

Shenita E. Williams (Henrico/VCU)

The needs of Black students experiencing mental health challenges are compounded by issues of race and culture. Afrocentricity advances social justice and human rights by honoring cultural uniqueness, personal strengths, and community development. Educators can use Afrocentricity in practice, policy, and research to support the needs of Black students.

Takeaways

- Participants will be able to define Afrocentricity.
- Participants will be able to identify and explain tenets of an African-Centered approach when working with Black students.
- Participants will be able to describe the application of each tenet in action.

BREAKOUT FOUR

12:40–1:40

Trauma-informed Education to Promote Productive Learning and Healthy Development

Sunny Shin (VCU), Sara Abdel-hamid (VCU), Brooke Nuckols (VCU)

We live in a society where the health and life prospects of our students are plagued by widespread exposure to adverse childhood experiences, and its disruptive impacts on learning. This session provides an overview of adverse childhood experiences in childhood, their impact on education, and strategies to build trauma-informed schools.

Takeaways

- What is adverse childhood experiences or child trauma?
- How trauma may influence learning and mental health of students?
- How to build a trauma-informed school

Something Had to Give During Shutdown, and It Was Schoolwork

Jentry Barrett (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Emily Wilson (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Martinique Sealy (VCU), Jungwon Eum (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Yuenjung Joo (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Gwen Nugent (University of Nebraska-Lincoln)

During the Spring 2020 COVID-19 school shutdowns, many parents in rural Nebraska multitasked parenting, teaching, and working from home. The stress of these competing roles necessitated a realignment of priorities. Subsequently, parents reduced children's workload and were able to guide children's negative responses using social-emotional and mental health strategies.

Takeaways

- Social-emotional knowledge assisted parents as they supported their children's emotional and behavioral regulation during the COVID-19 shutdown.
- Juggling multiple roles as parent, teacher, and worker put strain on family relationships. Parents responded to this by prioritizing family inter-connectedness and emotional well-being during the pandemic and school shutdown.
- There was a mismatch between what educators were asking parents to do, and what parents were able to accomplish given the constraints of multiple children at home and parents' employment.

SESSION 10: LEVERAGING RESEARCHER-PRACTITIONER PARTNERSHIPS FOR EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

Thread: Promising Partnerships

(MERC Research) Boundary Crossing: Examples of University / School Division Partnership on Local Evaluation Efforts

Jesse Senechal (VCU), Tiffany Hinton (Henrico)

Over the past two years, Henrico County Public Schools and the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium have partnered on local evaluation efforts within the division. This session will include discussion of a collaborative evaluation project exploring a behavior program for students with disabilities. Presenters will share the approach taken, benefits, and lessons learned.

Takeaways

- Attendees will learn about models of research practice partnership.
- Attendees will learn about a specific example of a research practice partnership project.
- Attendees will have opportunities for networking with educational stakeholders who have shared interest in the potential impact of research practice partnerships.

(MERC Research) Data-Driven Decision Making: Using Stakeholder Survey Dashboards to Inform School and Division Level Policy and Practice in Henrico

David Naff (VCU), Tiffany Hinton (Henrico), Joy Reed (Henrico), Katie Taylor (Henrico), Nicole Henderson (Henrico)

This presentation will profile how principals and division leaders Henrico County Public Schools have utilized dashboards developed by the Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium to visualize response data from their annual stakeholder survey. The survey data captures the perspectives of students, parents, and staff along key metrics relative to the division's strategic plan, and allows for annual assessment of progress at the school and division level. Participants will learn about the dashboard development process and this research-practice partnership guides data-driven decision making for the benefit of students.

Takeaways

- Participants will learn strategies for soliciting input from key stakeholders in their schools and divisions.
- Participants will learn how to routinely leverage a strategic plan as a guiding document for promoting growth across predetermined metrics.
- Participants will learn processes for creating and sharing data dashboards to support decision-making at the school and division level.

SESSION 11: HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING NEW TEACHERS

Thread: Promising Teacher Development

The Art of the First Year

Robert Stevens (CodeRVA)

This session sets out to provide new and novice teachers (and the administrators who support them) with tools that will help them navigate the critical first few years in the classroom. Teachers will leave this session better prepared to educate students in the most demanding environments.

Takeaways

- Attendees will learn how to better support their students by learning strategies to develop authentic relationships with students, parents, and colleagues.
- Attendees will learn ways to create a culturally responsive classroom environment.

Attending to Teacher Voice and Choice: A Data-Driven Approach to Teacher Induction Programming

Dr. Missy Davis Hill (Chesterfield)

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated an already serious teacher retention issue in public education, and currently, school divisions nationally face a significant teacher shortage for the 2021-2022 school year. This session focuses on data collection and data review strategies to improve the induction year for new teachers by seeking to provide targeted and relevant professional development to early career teachers.

Takeaways

- Solicitation of Teacher Voice for Induction Programming at the School and Division Level
- Data Review for Targeted, Year-Long Induction Programming
- Data Review of Teacher Participation & Impact on Retention

Macon Mentors: A Partnership to Support Cooperating Teachers in Student Teaching Experiences

Julie Dauksys (Hanover, VCU), Amy Thompson (Hanover)

This presentation will highlight the partnership developed between Hanover County Public Schools and Randolph-Macon College through the Macon Mentors cooperating teachers program. Participants will learn about the research and development of the program, and the mentoring relationships developed between cooperating teachers, college supervisors, and student teachers.

Takeaways

- Cooperating teachers as mentors develop stronger relationships with and support for student teachers.
- Cooperating teachers, through communities of practice, can develop their skills of modeling, dialog, and reflection.
- Partnerships between schools and colleges/universities foster ongoing professional development.

SESSION 12: PROMOTING STUDENT VOICE IN CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

Thread: Promising Equity Strategies

Supporting Positive Youth Expression in a Post-COVID World

Vicki Yeroian (GLSEN Richmond & Podium RVA), Candace Weather (Podium RVA)

Understanding the experiences of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ youth in an era of changing virtual and socially distanced school and how to facilitate supportive, trauma informed spaces for personal expression and celebration of identity.

Takeaways

- How to provide supportive spaces for healthy youth expression in a digital world
- Strategies for how to discuss COVID-related changes in school standards and norms.
- Understanding modern school-based and virtual learning experiences of historically marginalized youth groups, particularly LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC youth.



BREAKOUT FIVE

1:50–2:50

Cav Congress: High School Students in Equity Work

Korinthia D. Nicolai (VCU), Ibrahim Omeish (Student at W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax), Leo Lee, (Student at W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax), Omeed Shahbazi (Student at W.T. Woodson High School in Fairfax)

High school students will present (a) why equity is important to them, (b) how they have implemented activities to support equity in the past year, and (c) future plans to continue promoting equity and amplify the voices of all students. Additionally, connections to motivation research will be presented.

Takeaways

- Attendees will hear from high school students directly.
- Attendees will leave with actionable ideas to bring equity to the center of high school student life.
- Attendees will learn about motivation research as it connects to Cav Congress.

SESSION 13: WILL THEY STAY OR WILL THEY GO? LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE MERC TEACHER RETENTION STUDY

Thread: Promising Retention Strategies

(MERC Research) Will They Stay or Will They Go? Lessons Learned from the MERC Teacher Retention Study

Jesse Senechal (VCU), Kasey Dye (VCU), Valerie Robnolt (VCU), Elizabeth Edmondson (VCU), Erica Ross (VCU), Adria Hoffman (VCU), Jonathan Becker (VCU)

In this session, the MERC Teacher Retention Team will share highlights from a range of projects focused on the factors that support retention in the PK12 system. Connections will be made across the projects and attendees will dialogue about practical steps that can be taken for supporting the profession moving forward.

Takeaways

- Attendees will learn about a range of research projects connected to the MERC teacher retention study.
- Attendees will engage in dialogue to consider the connections across the projects and practical implications for policy and practice.
- Attendees will have opportunities for networking with other educational stakeholders interested in teacher retention.

SESSION 14: SUPPORTING STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Thread: Promising Student Wellbeing

(MERC Research) Understanding The Mental Health Impacts of Covid-19 on Pk-12 Students: A Systematic Review of The Literature

David Naff (VCU), Shenita Williams (Henrico, VCU), Jenna Darby, (Chesterfield), Melissa Yeung (Bowling Green State University)

This presentation will share highlights from a systematic literature review of all empirical research published between March of 2020 and May of 2021 focused on the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on PK-12 students. Researchers will share the five themes that emerged from the review: the disruptive nature of COVID-19, the connection between caregiver and student mental health, the broad mental health impacts of the pandemic, particularly impacted student groups, and evidence of resilience and coping in students during the coronavirus. Practical strategies for offering mental health support to students in schools will be shared.



BREAKOUT SIX

3:00–4:00

Takeaways

- Participants will learn empirical evidence of the mental health impacts of COVID-19 on PK-12 students.
- Participants will learn evidence of positive strategies that students have developed to cope during the pandemic.
- Participants will learn practical strategies for supporting the mental health of students in schools during and after COVID-19.

Making Mindfulness Accessible in PreSchool & Elementary Classrooms

Matt Shenker (Hanover, The Mindfulness Counselor)

Mindfulness and emotional regulation skills are quickly becoming essential skills that all schools need to teach and support. What does the process look like for doing this with our youngest students? Matt worked as an elementary school counselor for four years and now works privately as a Mindfulness teacher, counselor, and consultant. In this session he shares the multi-year process he led and the blueprint he follows when working with other schools and districts.

Takeaways

- Attendees will leave with an expanded understanding of mindfulness and emotional regulation
- Attendees will leave with a greater understanding of why specifically teaching emotional regulation skills is essential in elementary classrooms
- Attendees will leave with an example blueprint of a multi-year staff professional training process that moves from science-based philosophy to practical tools and systems.

Providing Effective Student Supports: Making MTSS Work in Middle School

Mike Littleton (Williamsburg James City County Public Schools), Ronald Wallace, (Williamsburg James City County Public Schools)

The Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) model is designed to create an educational environment that is built on effective procedures, and a program to provide individual supports for students in need. In this session, facilitators will share how they developed an effective MTSS program in their school, and share an organizational framework for teams to establish an individualized program that will lead to student success.

Takeaways

- Discover how to develop an effective MTSS team in your school.
- Establish a method to create school-wide goals that meet the specific needs of your school community.
- Share an organizational framework for teams to establish an individualized program which will lead to student success.

SESSION 15: ADVANCING STEM EDUCATION IN A NEW ERA

Thread: Promising Access

IDEAs in STEM

Alison Dossick (VCU)

I will share how to combine the tenets of Universal Design for Learning and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, applying these to increase SPED students' sense of belonging STEM. I will also share specific strategies to use in STEM classrooms to increase the accessibility of content and experimentation.

Takeaways

- Making a STEM classroom accessible to all learners need not be difficult.
- Easy changes can be made for students to reinforce learning.
- A student's STEM identity is enhanced by relevant and accessible lessons.

Purposeful Diversity in Computer Science Education: Successes and Challenges at a Regional Magnet School

Amy Corning (VCU), Jon Becker (VCU), Samantha Hope (VCU), Kume Goranson (CodeRVA), John Mustachio, (CodeRVA), Jasmine Simmons (CodeRVA)

CodeRVA Regional High School is a magnet school that prepares a diverse group of students for futures in computer science. Our research evaluates its success in ensuring equitable access and reflecting the region's diversity, providing a unique educational experience, and promoting students' sense of interest and belonging within computer science.

Takeaways

- Appreciate the value of a carefully designed and executed evaluation of an educational intervention.
- Learn how a regional high school can increase equity of access to computer science education and bring together a diverse group of students.
- Gain understanding of the importance – and challenges – of furthering diversity and equity in STEM education.



Hybrid Spaces that Promote Science Discourse in CCPS & RPS Middle Schools

Martinique Sealy (VCU), Christine Bae (VCU), Lauren Cabrera (VCU), Jessica Gladstone (VCU), Tracee Foster (Richmond), Michael Stange (Chesterfield), Eeman Salem (Chesterfield)

VCU researchers and RPS/CCPS middle school science teachers conducted action research in virtual classrooms with the goal of creating equitable opportunities for science discourse in 2020-21. We will highlight 1) examples of discourse activities used in f2f and virtual platforms and 2) lesson study as a research-practitioner partnership model.

Takeaways

- Attendees will further their understanding of science talk opportunities that engage students' need to connect content to their own lives
- Attendees will learn how ongoing collaborations allowed teachers to observe one another's practice and how valuable teachers sharing and learning from one another has been during this project and pandemic.
- Attendees will hear how teachers gradually adapted their lessons to accommodate students' especially during this time of major crises and transitions

SESSION 16: SUPPORTING MARGINALIZED STUDENT POPULATIONS

Thread: Promising Equity Strategies

Supporting Inclusive Multilingual Learner Family Engagement: Policies, Practices, and Models

Hali Massey (VCU), Kate Rolander (VCU)

Family and community engagement in education are strong predictors of student achievement, especially for multilingual learners. This session outlines family engagement policies, equitable family engagement resources, inclusive engagement strategies, and strategies to support instructors and staff in this work to harness the full potential of diverse learners.

Takeaways

- Understanding of many of the challenges multilingual families encounter in their schools nationally and in Virginia
- Identification of federal, state, and local division policies that impact family engagement for multilingual learners
- Culturally responsive strategies and inclusive models for implementing family engagement practices with multilingual families

From Exclusion to Inclusion – Transforming the Institutional and Human Barriers to Educational Resources for Vulnerable, Marginalized Student Populations

Peter Willis (Chesterfield)

Vulnerable, marginalized student populations face exclusionary school environments because they lack social, economic, and cultural capitals recognized and valued by schools and school personnel. A critical examination of school policies, practices, and personnel offers the possibility of transformative change to create greater equitable access to educational resources for all students.

Takeaways

- School policies and practices must undergo critical examination to determine their effects on vulnerable, marginalized student populations. Students who are members of these populations should be encouraged to participate in the critical examination.
- School personnel must examine their roles through a critical lens to determine whether they serve as agents of enforcement for exclusionary policies and practices or serve as agents of empowerment for vulnerable, marginalized student populations. Schools and school divisions should provide professional development to not only address bias, equity, diversity, and inclusion but also build capacity for empowerment and transformation.
- Exclusionary school policies and practices are not self-enforcing, so researchers must examine how school personnel create exclusive or inclusive schools.

SESSION 17: DATA-DRIVEN PRACTICES TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

Thread: Promising Student Support Systems

Sustaining a Balanced Calendar Initiative

Taylor Snow (Henrico), Elizabeth Baber (Chesterfield), Brandon Petrosky (Henrico)

What internal and external factors affect the sustainability of a major school policy initiative like the shift to a year-round school calendar? How can school leaders apply these lessons to their own school and division-based policy initiatives?

Takeaways

- Careful consideration of factors that drive the support of internal and external stakeholders and effective and systematic communication with those groups is vital for sustainable policy initiatives
- Purposeful design of instructional leadership structures that leverage the talents of both current and burgeoning instructional leaders to supervise extended school time is critical
- Without community support, year-round and extended school calendar initiatives are difficult to sustain.

CLOSING PANEL

4:10–5:30

Panelists will share their perspectives on how public education will evolve based on the experiences of the last year and a half.

Using Machine Learning to Support Student Attendance Practices

Eric Ekholm (Chesterfield), Patricia Fox (Chesterfield)

In this session, we describe how Chesterfield County Public Schools used student-, school-, and community-level data to develop a model predicting which students would likely be chronically absent in the future, as well as how school and division leaders used information from this model.

Takeaways

- Using big data approaches, divisions can accurately predict which students will be chronically absent in the future
- Statistical models can help educators develop targeted, proactive solutions
- Machine learning can address equity concerns



Matt Caratachea is the Coordinator of Technology Integration and Innovation for Goochland County Public Schools and a recent graduate of the Curriculum, Culture, and Change PhD program in the VCU School of Education. His interests in both research and practice include teachers and students using technological tools paired with maker-centered learning to create artifacts of learning. Currently his work focuses on the possible intersection of virtual reality and maker-centered learning.

MATT CARATACHEA

Coordinator of Technology Integration and Innovation, Goochland County Public Schools



Erica Daniels is a school counselor at Vernon Johns Middle School in Petersburg City Public Schools. She has 15 years of experience as a school counselor in both the middle and high school setting. She is passionate about working with students and being a leader in her school community. She is also a Doctoral Candidate at Regent University in Counselor Education and Supervision.

ERICA DANIELS

School Counselor at Vernon Johns Middle School, Petersburg City Public Schools



Building upon 10 years as a special educator, Dr. De Arment now prepares early intervention to preschool (birth to 5) and K-12 grade special educators through the master's program in special education. Dr. De Arment is the curriculum coordinator for the special education track of RTR and is co-principal investigator of Project 3IP and the recently funded Project PIRR, both federally-funded grants for interdisciplinary preparation of early intervention, early childhood special education, and related services professionals. Her research interests include special education teacher preparation, collaborative, inclusive, and equitable teaching practices, and universal design for learning.

SERRA DE ARMENT

Assistant Professor, Counseling and Special Education, Virginia Commonwealth





Prior to starting pharmacy school, Sera was a certified teacher in elementary education, art, and biology with experience teaching in both charter and public schools in Colorado and most recently in Virginia. Sera was born in Seoul, South Korea and moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa at the age of eight and is a former English as a Second Language (ESL) student. Sera's passion for English Language Learners (ELL) and science education comes from her background as a former ESL student with a love of science. During her teaching career, Sera taught domestically as well as internationally including: six-month internship in Italy and Germany, one year as English teacher in South Korea, and two years as a kindergarten teacher in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Most recently, she completed five years with Fairfax County Public Schools and was part of the cohort of teachers that transitioned from in-person to virtual learning in 2020 due to COVID-19. In 2020, Sera chose to further invest in her education by pursuing a career in pharmacy in part as a response to the global pandemic. However, Sera is still deeply committed and passionate about K-12 education and its role in preparing students to enter STEAM fields.

SERA LEE

Second Year Pharmacy Student, Virginia Commonwealth University



Alex Peskin is a Junior attending Goochland High School. He is President of his class and is a part of many clubs at Goochland, one of which he is forming himself this year. He is also a graduate of the High School Leaders Program through the Sorensen Institute at UVA. He has a passion for leadership in his community and puts an emphasis on student voice.

ALEX PESKIN

Junior at Goochland High School, Goochland County Public Schools



Patricia Woodberry is an elementary teacher with the Programs for Gifted and Talented in Richmond Public Schools. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Education and a Masters of Arts in Student Affairs in Higher Education. With certifications in Early Education, Middle Education, Intellectual Disabilities, and Gifted Education, Pat often quips she's seen just about everything in students from 2 to 22. For the past 20 years, she has grown with the Special Program for Academic and Creative Excellence (SPACE) as the program has evolved from a focus on talent identification to talent development and identification. The focus on equity in SPACE for RPS was sparked in part by an action research project that Pat developed through MERC and an evaluation of the screening, identification, and representation across the district. She is passionate about teaching kids to utilize critical thinking and problem-solving skills and focuses many of her efforts to bring STEM thinking to students from underrepresented populations in STEM fields.

PATRICIA WOODBERRY

Gifted and Talented Teacher, Richmond Public Schools



Victoria Parent is an English teacher at Monacan High School. She holds a master's degree in secondary English education from the University of Mary Washington, and has been teaching for four years. She was a 2020 Book Love Foundation grant recipient, is a ProjectLIT chapter leader, and a proud Filipina-American. She's interested in action research, culturally responsive teaching, education for empowerment, and co-creating classroom spaces where students feel an authentic sense of belonging.

Moderator

VICTORIA PARENT

English Teacher at Monacan High School, Chesterfield County Public Schools



Alma Kenup is in her 11th year in education. She currently teaches English at Quioccasin Middle School in Henrico County. During the course of her teaching career, Alma has experienced education in various U.S. states and marks her time teaching students in a bilingual education program in the United Arab Emirates as a career highlight. She is a passionate advocate for more equitable systems in education that serve both neurodiverse and culturally rich populations. She is a lifelong learner and is always looking to improve her craft.

Moderator

ALMA KENUP

English Teacher at Quioccasin Middle School, Henrico County Public Schools

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