

the Statewide Standard

2021



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
Illinois State University



the Statewide Standard

Table of contents

Learn local, teach local..... 4

Creating pathways to prepare more teachers

Promoting growth and change in the COE..... 6

A new initiative to provide coordinated and sustained professional development opportunities

Partners in education..... 8

College of Education, suburban school district team up to place teaching candidates in the midst of the pandemic

Celebrating EdBird excellence..... 10

COE celebrates success stories of students, faculty, staff, and alumni

Introducing Dr. Dakesa Piña 13

COE welcomes diversity, equity, and inclusion officer

Learning from disruption14

As schools cautiously inch toward normalcy, one superintendent leans on her research to answer difficult questions

The EdBird E-tutoring experience16

Faculty and staff develop program to serve local students and provide clinical opportunities for teacher candidates

Top 10 takeaways from teaching in a pandemic18

Laboratory school teachers offer perspectives on important lessons from teaching during the pandemic

Donor recognition.....19

Generous gifts benefit COE and campus community

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Illinois' first public university

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Message FROM THE DEAN



Hello from the College of Education at Illinois State! Over the past year, we have all faced many challenges, but two of them demanded our unwavering attention and dedication. The worldwide pandemic and the urgent nationwide demand for the dismantling of systemic racism both required our community of Redbird educators to continue to assess their work, evaluate their commitments, and change their practices to address the new world around us. We've grown as researchers and writers, teachers and students in

dealing with the most pressing social issues of our times. I am honored to share the stories in this edition of *the Statewide Standard* that celebrate our Redbird educators as they adapt, persevere, and emerge as leaders in the field of education and the broader society.

As a university community, we were all horrified by what we saw happen in 2020 to George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and too many other fellow Americans. The College of Education is committed to being a place that helps create a more just America. In the stories that follow, you'll see that the College is implementing many initiatives that will lead to sustained learning, growing, and change. Among those initiatives, we welcomed the first college-level diversity and inclusion officer at the University. We are holding ongoing professional development for our faculty and staff that focuses on anti-racism and equity and inclusion in the classroom. We hosted a college-wide book club and conversation with Dr. Anthony Abraham Jack, the author of *The Privileged Poor*.

This year we are excited to launch three new community-based partnership programs where future teachers will learn local and teach local. The programs provide a hybrid model of learning where students can take classes, student teach, and then secure a teaching position all in their home communities. One of these programs, Teach Chicago Tomorrow, will prepare students from Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to teach in CPS. Others focus on the needs of Peoria and the school districts of Central Illinois. Each of these exciting new programs allows the college to continue to prepare the highest quality educators for our communities.

The stories shared in this edition showcase the great work of our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors who have excelled in these times. These are some of the stories of our Redbird educator leaders who are paving the way for more innovative and equitable classrooms and a better society.

I hope you'll find these stories inspirational and that you'll join us in whatever way you can as we play our part in doing the great and hard work of creating a more perfect union. I would love to hear your story and learn about the great work you are doing in the field. Please feel free to reach us via email at Education@IllinoisState.edu.

With Redbird Pride,

Dr. James Wolfinger

Dean and Professor
College of Education

LEARN LOCAL TEACH LOCAL

A PATHWAY FOR PREPARING MORE TEACHERS

Illinois faces a dire teacher shortage with 4,500 open education positions across the state. Your Redbirds are rising to meet the challenge.

The shortage, especially notable in high need areas such as rural and urban districts and special education positions, is impacting the entire state. Illinois State's College of Education (COE) has committed to partnering with communities across the state to develop innovative teacher education programs that produce the highest quality educators. Three new community-based programs, grouped under the name CommuniTeach, will provide the high-quality education for which Illinois State is known in students' home communities. The partnerships are specially designed with community partners, including school districts and community colleges.

CommuniTeach programs meet students where they are, providing flexible and nontraditional pathways that include integration into their home community for clinical experiences when possible and innovative curricula and course delivery.

"Our mission is to provide the highest quality teachers for Illinois

and I'm proud of the work that our faculty and staff have done with many community partners," said Dr. James Wolfinger, dean of the College of Education. "We will continuously work to develop innovative teacher education programs that meet the needs of future teachers and our communities to ensure the best education for our kids."

COMMUNITY PARTNER PATHWAY

Community Partner Pathway is a partnership with community colleges to prepare working professionals for licensure to teach elementary education with an ESL endorsement in their home communities. Current community college partners include Carl Sandburg College, Heartland Community College, Illinois Central College, Illinois Valley Community College, and Spoon River College.

"When Illinois State was approached about this idea to help rural school districts, they were eager to see how they could partner to address the teacher shortage crisis," said Curt Oldfield '97, president of Spoon River College. "Illinois State's willingness to collaborate for the betterment of all of Illinois made this program come to life."

Rural communities have been hit hard with the teacher shortage, and this strategic partnership will ensure that small communities and school districts will have more high-quality teachers. Together with the community colleges, the COE will prepare community members to teach in local schools. Students who are place bound because of work or family obligations will have the opportunity to expand their skillset and knowledge so they can earn a degree and Professional Educator License and enter the classroom as a teacher.

Students will take courses part time in online and hybrid settings, with limited face to face sessions being held on campus on Saturdays. The first cohort is planned to begin with Illinois State within the next two years and will consist of paraprofessionals who are already working in the classroom.

"As a proud Illinois State agriculture education alumnus who transferred from Spoon River College, I know firsthand the important role that school districts play in our rural Illinois communities," said Oldfield. "I am proud that school districts, community colleges and Illinois State have come together to bring a high quality, creatively delivered solution that helps address the Illinois teacher shortage."

CommuniTeach

Illinois State University
Teacher Education Partnership

TEACH CHICAGO TOMORROW

Teach Chicago Tomorrow is a partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) that will prepare CPS alumni for successful careers at CPS schools. Graduates from the program will have deep community bonds, extensive field experience, and coursework designed around the needs of CPS students, all of which will help ensure a high-quality teaching workforce and longevity in the schools. This new program is a long-term strategy to prepare quality teachers who reflect the student population in CPS schools.

Chicago students will participate in education pathway activities in CPS and then complete an associate's degree and pre-requisite coursework at Truman College in Chicago. The Illinois State program will consist of summer bridge programming, online and hybrid coursework, and face to face courses held in Chicago. In their last year of college, students will complete a year-long student teaching experience in a CPS school.

Students can choose from the following majors: Special Education Learning and Behavior Specialist, Elementary Education with ESL endorsement, or Bilingual-Bicultural Elementary Education.

"With this new structure, we are excited to prepare quality teachers for the city of Chicago in many high-need teaching areas," said Wolfinger. "CPS approached us with a serious teacher shortage issue, and we are ready to work collaboratively with them and the City Colleges to meet the challenge ahead so that we can continue to prepare the best teachers for Illinois."

The hallmark of this program is strategic student support and intensive community involvement. Teachers who are engaged in the community and under-

stand the local culture are much more likely to be successful in the classroom.

The National Center for Urban Education (NCUE) in COE has been doing just that for over 17 years in Chicago. NCUE has extensive partnerships with community organizations focused on education and CPS schools. Now NCUE will use their well-established model to prepare CPS students to teach in CPS schools, through the Summer Bridge Program.

The Summer Bridge Program will be a requirement of Teach Chicago Tomorrow for each of the four summers leading into an academic year. This cohort model program will focus on students learning about Chicago's vibrant communities and how those communities can provide support during teaching. It will include mentorship opportunities, immersive community projects and activities, visits to Illinois State's campus, and licensure exam preparation. The first cohort began this summer.

"NCUE is very intentional when working with pre-service teachers to include learning about the communities in which they will be teaching," said NCUE Executive Director Dr. Maria Zamudio. "Each community has its own distinct culture and community assets. Since our students may teach in a different neighborhood than where they grew up in Chicago, it's vitally important for them to understand the culture and resources in the community where they will teach."

TEACH FOR TOMORROW: PEORIA

With its first semester complete, the Teach for Tomorrow: Peoria program is preparing students to become licensed special education teachers in the greater Peoria area. The program is designed for working professionals, primarily teaching assistants and substitute teachers.

"This program is so exciting because we are respecting the work experience that many of these students have," said Jayme Corcoran, instructional assistant professor.

Our mission is to provide the highest quality teachers for Illinois and I'm proud of the work that our faculty and staff have done with many community partners.

—James Wolfinger, dean

"They have unique challenges related to family and work obligations, but we can tackle these effectively as a cohort. Experience is an enormously important benefit for these students to be successful when they enter the classroom."

The part-time coursework is hybrid with face to face instruction taking place in Peoria. Students are working, studying, and student teaching in their home communities, which are in need of more special education teachers. The first cohort will graduate in August 2023 with a bachelor's degree and a Professional Educator License with a K-21 Learning and Behavior Specialist endorsement.

"The Teach for Tomorrow program is offering me courses that I normally wouldn't be able to attend and I'm excited to finally finish my degree," said O.J. Skinner, a current student. "I live in the same area where my students live, I have a lot in common with them, and me finishing my degree gives them a little hope."

The College of Education is thrilled to innovate, adapt, and collaborate with these partners and looks forward to new opportunities that help achieve our mission of preparing the highest quality teachers for the state of Illinois.



PROMOTING *growth* AND CHANGE IN THE COE

Illinois State University launched the GROWTH Initiative in fall 2019 to provide professional development opportunities for faculty and staff across the entire University that are customized and relevant to the discipline of each college and department.

The College of Education GROWTH (COE GROWTH) initiative started in summer 2020 as a coordinated and sustainable professional development program for all COE faculty and staff. The COE GROWTH team is led by faculty representatives from each department and the Dean's Office. After completing the team training, analyzing recent college climate survey results, and witnessing the murders of Black Americans in summer 2020, the team knew that professional development in the college needed to be developed with an anti-racist lens.

"This work is centered on disrupting the current system of education to create learning environments that are culturally responsive and that promote anti-racist thinking," said Dr. Shamaine Bertrand, assistant professor in the School of Teaching and Learning and COE GROWTH team member.

The goals for the COE GROWTH team were to focus this past academic year on professional development for faculty that gives them the space and resources to

critically examine their courses so that they center on equity. Through this work, faculty can create or continue to build spaces in their classrooms for students and future teachers to have critical conversations, evaluate their work and learn how to create their own equitable classrooms.

"We have to sit here in this space, evaluate ourselves, and do this work together so that we can start to disrupt systems of oppression," said Bertrand. "Then we can start to expand that work to staff, students, and our communities."

Throughout the past academic year over 50 faculty and staff members participated in the GROWTH sessions that focused on critically examining course materials, design and instruction. The series concluded with a two-part workshop with Dr. Kisha Porcher, an assistant professor at the University of Delaware who teaches English education and specializes in centering Blackness in community-engaged learning and teaching. Porcher's workshops focused on the four C's for Teaching Liberation: Building Community, Centering Blackness, Cultivating Creativity, and Collaboration.

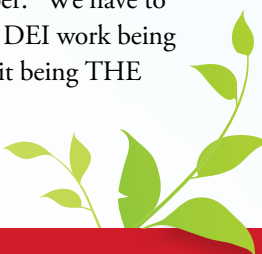
"I see Dr. Porcher's work as pragmatic for our culture and climate work in the COE. It is a crucial and necessary step to advance our commitment to anti-racism as we actively challenge anti-Blackness in the

classroom," said Dr. Linsay DeMartino, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations and COE GROWTH team member.

As the premier institution in the Midwest for preparing teachers, the college is committed to leading the way forward for ongoing and sustainable change so that all children can learn in safe spaces with teachers who reflect and understand their culture and values.

Over the summer 2021, a cohort of faculty is participating in an intensive session to redesign their courses that will build off the work done throughout the past academic year. The work across the college will continue in the fall semester 2021, focusing on implementing changes in classes and evaluating the impact of those changes. The goal is that this ongoing work will be woven into the fabric of the COE and part of everything that we do.

"This is a paradigm shift. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) work is where excellence and innovation come from and unless you are doing this work, your teaching cannot be excellent," said Dr. Dakesa Piña, DEI Officer in the COE and COE GROWTH team member. "We have to shift this paradigm from DEI work being this thing on the side to it being THE work."



What are we READING, LISTENING TO, OR WATCHING?

The COE GROWTH team is constantly reading, listening to, and watching media that helps them grow in their own DEI work. Check out their current top interests in DEI media.

DR. SHAMAINE BERTRAND

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, SCHOOL OF TEACHING AND LEARNING



Reading: *Professional Troublemaker: The Fear-Fighter Manual* by Luvvie Ajayi

DR. LINSAY DEMARTINO

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND FOUNDATIONS



Watching: Abolitionist Teaching Network (ABN) webinars

DR. STACEY JONES BOCK

ASSOCIATE DEAN



Listening to: Black Gaze podcast; Code Switch podcast

DR. TARA KACZOROWSKI

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION



Reading: 10th anniversary edition of *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander

DR. DAKESA PIÑA

COE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION OFFICER



Listening to: Future Insight podcast; Coffee and Books podcast



AN OPEN BOOK

The second-annual Open Book event, a book club hosted by Dean James Wolfinger, featured *The Privileged Poor: How Elite Colleges are Failing Disadvantaged Students*, by Dr. Anthony Jack. COE students, faculty, and staff read the book and then had the opportunity to participate in a discussion with Jack and colleagues as they reflected on how they can make their own classrooms more equitable and welcoming.

Named NPR Books Best Book of 2019, Jack documents the inequalities that some students face at elite colleges. He details his research and explains how policies and campus culture can negatively affect disadvantaged students. While the setting is an elite college, the lessons are applicable for teacher candidates, current teachers, administrators, and higher education.



PARTNERS *in* EDUCATION

College of Education,
suburban school
district team up
to place teaching
candidates in midst
of pandemic

With health and safety guidelines altering traditional student teaching and clinical internships, the College of Education (COE) quickly explored avenues to place teaching candidates in meaningful experiences. Alumni connections, col-

laboration, and creative problem solving allowed the COE to forge a brand new and mutually beneficial partnership with District 44 in Lombard.

Thirty-one Redbird teaching candidates—25 from early childhood, elementary, and middle level programs and six from the special education program—were placed in the district during the 2021 spring semester.

District 44 faculty enthusiastically welcomed the partnership with teacher candidates from the premier teacher education school in the Midwest.

“A lot of our staff members were excited to get some additional help in their classrooms while also being able to act as a mentor to provide some real life experiences to Illinois State students,”

said Westlake Middle School Principal Scott Stehlik '07. “It was really cool to see not only the excitement that Illinois State had, but the staff here was really, really excited to work alongside the Illinois State students as well.”

Redbird teaching candidates have helped District 44 teachers facilitate breakout rooms on Zoom, provide individual student attention, create lesson plans, and have learned how to be flexible—all vital skills for successful educators.

IT TAKES A TEAM

Stehlik, a middle-level education graduate, saw a need for Redbird teaching candidates to assist in an unprecedented time. In his own education, he benefited

greatly from mentorship while student teaching, and he understood the importance of undergraduate teaching prospects getting into the classroom.

Stehlik and his mentor and friend, Dr. Doug Hatch, associate professor in the School of Teaching and Learning, connected in October and started carving out a potential partnership. The parties at both Illinois State and District 44 rapidly laid the groundwork, and student placements were secured by December, a remarkable timeline considering the challenges schools faced during the height of the pandemic.

Nearly all the departments in the COE and staff across District 44 were involved in the process of creatively thinking of ways to utilize Redbird teaching candidates and provide them with meaningful teaching experiences.

“Between Illinois State and us, we figured there was a mutual benefit,” said Brett Sharkey ’97, chief district officer in District 44. “We needed help with our remote, in-person learning. We could have more people helping in the virtual classroom.”

And the extra voice in the room—figuratively—has allowed for more individualized attention for students who need it.

“We were getting so many reports from the field that they couldn’t do this without an Illinois State student teacher in the classroom,” added Jill Donnel, assistant director and undergraduate program coordinator in the School of Teaching and Learning.

LIFE LESSONS

Stehlik believes the planning needed to maneuver around the pandemic’s obstacles will be invaluable for teacher candidates, and he’s grateful this partnership can provide that.

“I think that’s where they (Illinois State teaching candidates) will really set themselves apart,” Stehlik said. “They have been able to take an atypical experience and pulled out some of these positives.”

Students placed in Lombard have learned from a strong contingent of educators who realize test scores and grades are only pieces to the overall puzzle. Stehlik said the district prides itself on making connections, and having Redbird teaching candidates in the classroom was another contact for students to utilize.

With a pipeline of Illinois State graduates already teaching in District 44, Redbird teaching candidates saw first-hand where an Illinois State education can take them. That’s a motivating force for the next generation of Redbird educators, who are constantly reminded that it’s most important to put students first.

“Honestly it just makes me really proud to be a Redbird,” said senior middle-level education major Emma Constantine, who completed her pre-student teaching clinical internship in a District 44 seventh-grade science class. “I hear all the time that I’m in such a good teacher education program. To see that play out in this school district is inspiring and keeps you going.”

INNOVATION FOR THE FUTURE

The partnership is a testament to COE faculty and staff innovatively developing a collaboration with a forward-looking district. It also speaks volumes about Redbird teaching candidates for adjusting to their situation when they’d prefer to be in a physical classroom.

“They are absolutely amazing,” Hatch said. “They don’t whine. They make the best of the opportunities that were presented to them. They are very resilient. I think they are getting the best experience they can.”

Both the College of Education and District 44 would like to see the partnership continue, and there are plans to extend the relationship. One of the biggest advantages from an Illinois State standpoint, Donnel said, is that it opens the door for students to connect with even

more schools outside of the Bloomington-Normal area, a trend they hope to continue with other districts.

The partnership was developed during a time of upheaval in education and every other part of the world. But Illinois State and a partner district made the best of the situation and will reap the benefits for years to come.

“The interns and student teachers from Illinois State are bringing so much to our district and students that it really is a partnership,” Stehlik said. “It’s literally one that absolutely everyone is benefiting from.”

A special thanks TO OUR PARTNERS

JILL DONNEL

Assistant Director and Undergraduate Program Coordinator, School of Teaching and Learning

DOUG HATCH

Associate Professor, School of Teaching and Learning

AMANDA PARROTT

Coordinator of Student Teaching, School of Teaching and Learning

ANNETTE RAVER

Student Placement Coordinator, Lauby Teacher Education Center

BRETT SHARKEY

Chief District Officer, District 44

SCOTT STEHLIK

Principal, Westlake Middle School



Illinois State University is proud to both prepare and employ some of the most caring and dedicated educators around.

Over the past year and half, we have heard countless stories of how our Redbird Educators are rising to the current challenges and excelling inside and outside the classroom. To celebrate the many accomplishments of Redbird alumni, faculty, staff, and friends, the College of Education would like to recognize just a few examples of this dedication to the field. We know there are so many more stories about tremendous educators who go above and beyond for their students and we'd love to hear them all.

COE	College of Education
TCH	School of Teaching and Learning
EAF	Department of Educational Administration and Foundations
SED	Department of Special Education



Dr. Christie Angleton and **Dr. Xiaoying Zhao**, assistant professors in TCH, piloted a children's book club

with a local Girl Scout troop focusing on children's assumptions regarding race and gender within picture books. They are looking forward to expanding the study into schools after the pandemic.

Dr. Shamaine Bertrand, assistant professor in TCH, partnered with colleague Dr. Kisha Porcher to create the Black Gaze Podcast. The podcast brings together the perspectives of two women in academia and provides a space for educators, teacher educators, students, and community that centers Blackness, educates, heals, and liberates.



Dr. Janet Caldwell, '77, M.S. Ed. '82, M.S. '93, Ed.D. '11, is an academic advisor for SED, and went the extra mile in supporting students in the new Teach for Tomorrow program

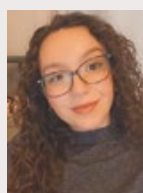
in Peoria. This new program, (featured on page 5), helps working professionals and non-traditional students reach their goals of teaching in a special education setting.



Lizzy Carroll '17 is a sixth- through eighth-grade special education teacher on the Southside of Chicago at Clara Barton Elementary School.

She founded Lead with Love (leadwith-lovechi.org) in 2020, a nonprofit organization that focuses on improving equity through its services to youth and families within disinvested neighborhoods. Carroll was recognized for her efforts as a finalist for WGN-TV's Remarkable Woman Award.

Nadya Chiavola '20 and **Nicole Almodovar '20** are both elementary education graduates and first year teachers at Joshua D. Kershaw Magnet School in Chicago's Englewood neighborhood. Teaching remotely, they were creative in building relationships with their students through yoga videos, making up songs over TikTok beats, and using a variety of technology to keep students engaged.



The **COE Tech Team** and **Laboratory School support staff** went the extra mile to distribute technology and provide train-

ings on its use, ensuring resources for every student, faculty, and staff member in the college and laboratory schools.

Jamillah Gilbert '94, M.S. '05, is the assistant director of Curriculum Services in University College and a current student in



the Leadership, Equity, and Inquiry doctoral program within EAF. She was creative in serving new Illinois State students through providing accommodations and developing flexible learning environments to increase access to all students.

Bess Johnson, principal consultant with the Illinois State Board of Education, was extremely helpful in assisting staff in the creation and approval of additional clinical opportunities and student teaching placements during the pandemic. During a time where in-person clinicals were no longer possible, she helped to ensure that our students were still able to get valuable experiences prior to student teaching.



Mark Jontry, M.S. '01, is an EAF alumnus and serves as regional superintendent of schools for the Regional Office of Education No. 17. He worked with the McLean County Health Department to provide regular updates to school administration and nurses about the pandemic status, which was helpful in making informed decisions regarding safely reopening schools for in-person/blended learning. This cooperation was also helpful in delivering vaccines to all eligible educators in a timely fashion.





Dr. Grace Kang, assistant professor in TCH, cultivated a partnership with Campaign Unit 4 School District through the civic engagement cohort. Throughout

the pandemic, teacher candidates were invaluable to their cooperating teachers in serving a diverse group of students through small group work, tutoring, and teaching the class in a virtual setting.

Lisa Kendall '01, program coordinator for the Heart of Illinois Low Incidence Association (HILIA), worked with her team to continue providing service to students who are D/deaf and hard of hearing or have low vision and blindness. Using remote and blended learning models, faculty and staff spent countless hours collaborating with families, servicing equipment and providing innovative teaching practices.



Carly Kirkman '20, like all new teachers, started off her career during very challenging times, but rose to the occasion to serve her students. As an itinerant teacher of the D/

deaf and hard of hearing in Oswego, her students are unable to wear masks due to their disabilities. Every day, she dons full medical protective gear to keep herself and her students safe, and to continue their learning.

In her first year of teaching, **Takira Mack '17** noticed that students in her Chicago Public School, Herzl School of Excellence, lacked school supplies and the funds to purchase them. Wanting to ensure her students had everything they needed to learn, she began



Back to School BBQs, which have doubled as fun community events and school supply donation centers. During the pandemic, collection items were expanded to PPE supplies for students and families.

Dr. Deborah MacPhee,

director of the Mary and Jean Borg Center for Reading and Literacy and professor in TCH, worked with several faculty and staff to create the Redbird Educator Series.

These one-hour, free, virtual professional development sessions shared research and evidence-based practices with pre-K-12 teachers on a variety of topics during a time when professional development became a major challenge.



Ana Pyper '16 is the associate director for the Nettie Bailey Student Achievement Program in the East Garfield Park neighborhood of Chicago.



During the pandemic, she and her staff initiated a remote learning support program to serve children of essential workers in the community. K-8 students completed their remote classes in a safe environment around peers of their own age, with meals and recreation time provided.

Dr. Robyn Seglem, professor, and **Dr. Anna Smith**, assistant professor, both in TCH, created Connecting the DOTS, a website ([experienceliteracy.wixsite.com/remote-learning](https://www.experienceliteracy.wixsite.com/remote-learning)) and speaker series to help teachers and families navigate the terrain of remote and hybrid learning during COVID-19.



Seglem and Smith pulled this together with expert involvement from over 50 faculty, teachers, and administrators, many of whom are Illinois State alumni.

Dr. Natalie Shaheen,

assistant professor in SED, initiated a project with the Children's



Discovery Museum in Uptown Normal, where students in her SED 357 class developed wayfinding tools for blind visitors. Students have completed one wayfinding text description thus far during the pandemic, and Shaheen looks forward to continued collaboration with the museum to eventually complete wayfinding for the entire museum.

Brandon Thornton '11, M.S. SED '16,

along with his colleague Jen Brooks, are involved with Project S.E.E (Students Entering Education). This program helps young learners, especially students of color, to find out more about teaching as a career, and has matched teacher education majors of color at Illinois State with a group of second, third, and fourth graders. Thornton, an ISBE Illinois Regional Teacher of the Year, also works with Teach Plus to develop policies that help recruit, retain, and promote teachers of color.



Introducing DR. DAKESA PIÑA

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION OFFICER

DR. DAKESA PIÑA joined the College of Education (COE) in spring 2021 as the first college-level diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) officer at Illinois State. With a Ph.D. in marriage and family



therapy from Texas Tech University, Piña joined Illinois State in 2010 as a counselor in Student Counseling Services (SCS) within

the Division of Student Affairs. In 2014, as part of a Student Affairs initiative to assess the inclusivity across each of its departments, Piña was chosen to lead the DEI efforts in Student Counseling. Since then, she became heavily involved and fell in love with DEI work.

“This work fits perfectly with my identities as a scientist, practitioner, and advocate,” said Piña. “I love seeing how a culture can shift to be more welcoming and inclusive.”

“I was thrilled that Dakesa agreed to join the College of Education,” said Dean James Wolfinger. “Her combination of warmth, graciousness, determination, and strategic thinking have made her an ideal Diversity Officer for us. I can’t wait to see how her work pays off in making our college an even stronger, more inclusive place for faculty, staff, students, and alumni.”

We sat down with Piña to get to know her and learn about her passion for DEI work.

What will you work on during your first year in this role?

My hope is to get to know as many of our COE stakeholders (i.e. students, faculty, staff, and alumni) as possible. The process of building relationships and honoring stakeholders’ lived experiences is extremely important to creating significant and sustainable DEI change. It will also be important to debunk the myth that DEI only focuses on race.

DEI focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion for many different identities including religious identity, veteran status, gender expression, racial identity, ability, and more. We want an inclusive community for every single member of the Illinois State COE community.

I will also gather data on all the DEI work that is happening in the COE to create a database that can be accessed by COE stakeholders. There are many amazing DEI initiatives already happening in the college and once the information is gathered, we can identify any gaps in achieving our COE DEI goals.

What does diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you?

Diversity is about harnessing the innovative power of diverse lenses. If you’ve ever interacted with a culture that is different than your own, you know that there is much to learn from other lenses including how to solve complex problems. Many govern-

ment agencies and Fortune 500 companies value diversity because of increased skill, innovation, and productivity that a diverse workforce can provide.

Equity looks at providing those with marginalized identities with resources and treatment that supports advancement and advocates for justice. Equity includes identifying and eliminating barriers for the historically underrepresented and underserved. Often equity can create an unease or fear that those with dominant identities will become oppressed or something will be “taken away,” but instead, equity is about restorative practices that improve and repair relationships, build healthy communities, and foster healing dialogues.

I see inclusion as working to eliminate unjust bias and creating systems with shared governance. Inclusion values all voices especially those that have traditionally been devalued in decision making.

How do you plan to work with faculty, staff, and students across the college to create a more equitable and inclusive environment?

I see my role as supporting efforts to assess and implement diversity, equity, and inclusion in the COE. This might include education on how to have difficult conversations, practice cultural humility, or myths about DEI. It may include consultation regarding practices, policies, and procedures that support meeting the College’s DEI goals. An important part of my role will be to help create sustainable systemic change for the COE.

LEARNING FROM

DISRUPTION

As schools cautiously inch toward normalcy, there is no shortage of difficult questions being asked. Redbird Jennifer Gill fields many of them as the leader of Springfield School District 186, where she has served as superintendent since May 2014.



To make it all work, administrators were forced to be reactive in solving issues over the past 15 months. But there's one question Gill has kept in her sights through the uncertainty.

"How can we as educators and communities use what we've endured during this time to innovate and improve?" she said.

To help answer this, she's turning to "disruptive innovation" theory. The perspective, which applies to both education and business, is not only driving her work in Springfield but her dissertation research. Gill is currently a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations' (EAF) P-12 administration program, having previously earned her chief school business official (CSBO) and superintendent endorsements through the University of Illinois at Springfield.

"There are times in our lives where something so disruptive happens that we have to change, and the pandemic did this for us overnight," she said.

The theory was initially created for business industry, but it has long demonstrated value in many other fields, particularly education. Gill says the approach is situated in finding silver linings and being prepared to adapt.

"Nobody likes the discomfort of disruption. But when something bad happens, there is always something good that comes out of it because we learn to adapt, and we learn to overcome the challenges in front of us," she said.

"My focus all along has been to think about the positives and to move us forward."

Remaining upbeat was tough when it came to the first task of the pandemic—telling teachers and families that their schools' doors would be closing indefinitely. It signaled a temporary end to traditional schooling.

Then came the remote teaching and learning environment.

"When we said we have to teach remotely, the idea of technology being a disrupter became even more obvious," she said.

"If we focus on understanding, accepting, and dealing with this disruptive force in a very organized way, we can help to determine how this disruption is going to help us in the future."

Few can forget the pain points. The words "spring 2020" may still induce anxiety as teachers recall the immediate heavy lifting required to put their classes online.

For Gill and other administrators, this meant supporting their community's many new needs. They were faced with a mile-long checklist, from getting technology into students' hands to preparing teachers to succeed in this new environment.

She said the matters of safety and security came first. But over time, the district has moved toward adaptive thinking to serve students who haven't been engaging and adding programming to prevent learning loss.

But solving these issues has sometimes required a change in mindset. For Gill, one



Gill visits with students at a Springfield elementary school.

of the biggest developments that has freed up time and resources are virtual meetings.

“As a leadership team we are actually meeting more often today than we were before the pandemic,” she said.

“Face to face meetings were ingrained into the way we do things. But with 31 principals and site administrators, you don’t want to pull everyone out of their buildings.”

The same goes for teacher leadership, training, and committee meetings. Gone are the days where educators need to get in their cars and drive to other schools. It’s just one example of many where disruption is uncovering new strategies and ways to combat problems of inequity.

“Prior to the pandemic, the thought of one-to-one student technology for K-12 seemed unreachable. Not just because it is costly to maintain, but because of the inequity of connectivity in our families’ homes and across our city,” she said.

Gill’s district was able to bridge that gap by getting a device into the hands of every student. They also purchased internet hotspots for more than 1,700 households.

Because parents and guardians play an enhanced role in the new learning environment, professional development and family

and community engagement activities were created to help them learn more about using the technology platforms.

“Now that we were pushed to have this type of environment, it is unlikely we will ever go back.”

But Gill knows Springfield is just a small illustration of what’s going on across the U.S. Her research focuses on uncovering as many of these effective new ideas as possible. To accomplish that, she’s calling on superintendents to pull their experiences together so instances of innovation can proliferate rather than dissipate.

“The creator of disruptive innovation describes how businesses failed when they sat back and said, ‘Oh, this tough time is going to pass,’ or ‘my product’s good, I don’t need to change it.’

“And I think education is at that crossroads. This pandemic has been a lever for us to realize that we can’t just continue on with comprehensive education as we always have done. We need to make sure that we’re opening our eyes to what’s possible in remote learning.”

Importantly, Gill is not claiming strategies that have worked during the pandemic are sure-fire wins for districts in 2022 and beyond. However, the lengthy remote and hybrid periods have allowed for more evidence and clarity.

“We are in the middle of it still. But we’re getting to the other side, slowly, but surely. I’m working toward understanding what resonates with other su-

perintendents in my interviews, and there will be follow-ups and focus groups. But Springfield and other districts are getting a feel for which of the promising practices that were initially put in place are going to be the ones that really stick for the long term.”

Between serving in one of the most demanding roles in education, being a mother, and finishing her coursework, Gill said it has taken her a little longer than some of her fellow students to complete her dissertation. She believes the strong support system in the department is a primary contributor to her persistence.

“My classes were a great balance of teaching you how to be a good researcher; how to be a good writer; and how to think about things analytically using a variety of resources,” she said.

“But also, at the same time, EAF gives you those opportunities to apply that to the real world. And to the jobs that we’re doing.”

As we all dream of greener pastures in a post-pandemic world, educators can also look forward to Gill’s contribution for tilling new ground in the field of education.



Gill celebrates with high school students during a city basketball tournament.

THE EdBird E-TUTORING EXPERIENCE

“Our experience with E-tutoring has been nothing but positive. The change that we are seeing in our daughter’s confidence goes beyond her studies,” said Jim Baity, parent of an E-tutoring student.



First grade student Layton L. works on an E-tutoring lesson.

When the pandemic began, students’ lives were turned upside down, and their education experiences were immediately moved to virtual learning. Concern and conversations sprouted up among Illinois State University faculty and staff regarding what could be done to support students’ learning while ensuring the University was still preparing teacher candidates in the best way possible. Enter E-tutoring.

In spring 2020, all teacher candidates had to be removed from face-to-face experiences in classrooms. While student teachers were able to return to a mixture of face-to-face and remote teaching environments in fall 2020, teacher candidates in the semesters prior to their student teaching experience were no longer able to have a typical clinical experience, due to rules from schools and the Illinois Department of Public Health.

Clinical experiences are key for teacher candidates to get hands on teaching prior to being fully immersed in a classroom setting during student teaching. With the loss of these important face-to-face clinical experiences, some sort of meaningful experience was needed.

A COLLABORATIVE FOUNDATION

Teacher education programs throughout the country were experiencing the same issues, and Dr. Linda Haling ’93, M.S. ’96, Ed. D. ’05, dean of the College of Education and Human Services at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, reached out to her alma mater and former colleagues in the School of Teaching and Learning to discuss the possibility of joining their consortium for E-tutoring.

Initial conversations were fruitful, but the strong Redbird commitment to support local communities led to the creation of the Illinois State University E-tutoring system.

Faculty and staff in teacher education programs across the University came together throughout the summer of 2020 to develop a program that would serve local students and provide clinical opportunities for teacher candidates. Members of the planning committee worked extensively with general counsel to ensure that all legal needs were met. Additionally, Illinois State Board of Education staff were extremely helpful in streamlining approval processes, including adding E-tutoring as one of several additional clinical opportunities during the pandemic.

A TEAM EFFORT OF TRAINING

“Faculty from the Lab Schools, the School of Teaching and Learning, the Department of Special Education, and other teacher education programs were all a huge part of getting clinical students ready to tutor. The importance of having faculty participating in the development of these trainings was key to the success of the E-tutoring program,” said Jill Donnel, M.S. ’06, assistant director and undergraduate program coordinator for the School of Teaching Learning.

Faculty wanted to ensure that their teacher candidates had the necessary support to serve their students in the best way possible, especially given this new mode of virtual learning. To prepare the clinical students, thorough training modules were developed. These online modules created an easy way for clinical students to complete all necessary forms and provided numerous training videos and other resources to assist the clinical students.

“It was so rewarding to work alongside interventionists from the Lab Schools to create and edit instructional videos that would help to prepare our clinical students to engage in virtual instruction with students across Illinois,” said Dr. Deborah MacPhee, professor in the School of Teaching and Learning and director of the Mary and Jean Borg Center for Reading and Literacy.

Once students received their training, the E-tutoring program was rolled out to area districts near the Normal campus. Illinois State tutors were matched with local students who expressed a need for tutoring. The results proved the program was a necessity within the community to support local students across age groups and subject areas, with more than 500 tutoring requests during the first semester of E-tutoring. The program continued to be offered in spring 2021.

A SHOW OF SUPPORT

“E-tutoring has been dually beneficial to our teacher candidates and teacher education programs for the valuable experience as well as to the community by providing tremendous support to students,” said Dr. Christy Borders, director of the Cecilia J. Lauby Teacher Education Center.

Another value of the program is the flexibility it provides for teacher education faculty to drop in on live sessions or review recorded sessions later to help provide valuable feedback to teacher candidates as they work with their students.

“We are very excited to fulfill a need of the community so quickly through this E-tutoring program. As a parent of a participating student, I saw firsthand the impact of the school changes on K-12 learners as well as the challenge it was for parents to try and provide this extra support in addition to their normal responsibilities. E-tutoring has been able to help both students and parents during this challenging time,” said Sara Porter ’04, M.S. ’09, coordinator of clinical experiences and student affairs for the Department of Special Education.

It’s no surprise that creators of the program have seen the value of the E-tutoring program during these times, but those who have been directly involved in the day-to-day interactions have also sung its praises:

“This is our second semester using E-tutoring, and our experience has been phenomenal. Our son loves the one-on-one attention. Both our tutors have strived to review relevant content based upon his needs and have done an excellent job keeping the sessions fun. We look forward to these sessions each week.”—Darci Lindstrom, parent of a first grader

“I was really impressed with how our tutor made it a priority to get to know our son. She was able to use that connection to give him relatable examples and help him stay focused. In the midst of COVID and homeschooling, he needed to hear another voice besides his parents. I appreciated her patience and the support she gave to help him grow in his math and reading skills. We are very grateful for this program.”—Amanda Reynolds, parent of a second grader



Tutor Dayna Frio works virtually with her student.

“I tutored a middle school student in social sciences, and I was able to learn the important lesson of getting to know my student to build a trust first, which helped her to engage more with me. This was a great opportunity and it gave me ideas for ways of teaching that I will use later.” —Tutor Dayna Frio, senior history education major from St. Charles

To find out about the E-tutoring program, email us at EdbirdTutoring@IllinoisState.edu.

A special thanks

A special thanks to the members of the E-tutoring Planning Committee

Cecilia J. Lauby Teacher Education Center

Dr. Christy Borders, Jill Janes

School of Teaching and Learning

Jill Donnel, Dr. Deborah MacPhee, Amy Tellor

Department of Special Education

Dr. Tara Kaczorowski, Sara Porter

Laboratory Schools

April Davenport, Teresa Fitzgerald, Christine Paxson

Department of History

Dr. Monica Noraian

TOP 10 TAKEAWAYS *from* **TEACHING** *in* *a pandemic*



We sat down with two faculty associates at Metcalf School who are no strangers to navigating the journey of educational technology and remote learning. Instructional facilitator Kristi Sutter and middle school science teacher Mike Jones '95, M.S. '18, have 50 years of teaching experience between them and have presented multiple times on numerous topics related to educational technology. Both are also non-tenure track faculty in the School of Teaching and Learning and offered their perspectives on important teaching takeaways from this experience.

1. Building connections with all students

Focusing on the social emotional learning and mental health of the student over class content is hugely important. We definitely found that we need to follow the Maslow before Bloom concept of checking in with the students to make sure their basic needs are met first.

2. Taking risks and embracing failures

This is the time to try something new. We stress risk-taking to our students, and this was an opportunity for teachers to do the same thing. As a result, we have found new opportunities for students to learn. Lots of mistakes were made, but students and educators are better for it.

3. Student agency

Having a more flexible learning environment for students has enabled them to have more choice and voice in what and how they learn. This has served to better connect students to their own learning and has provided opportunities for differentiation.

4. Take time for yourself

Teachers and students are stressed. Lots of changes occurred at the same time, and the teaching day has been thrown all out of whack. It has really shined the light on how important it is for teachers to take time for self-care so they can reach their students.

5. Alternative ways to check for understanding

Teachers had a toolbox full of strategies to check for understanding during face-to-face teaching, and remote learning challenged teachers to explore digital tools for formative assessment (such as EdPuzzle, Nearpod, Flipgrid, and others) to inform instruction. When students participated in this digital reflection, we found an unexpected benefit; they took more ownership in their learning.

6. Making connections outside the classroom

In the pre-COVID world, having speakers come to the classroom could prove challenging. Now that people are more comfortable with the Zoom environment, it's possible to bring in guest experts from around the country to share their expertise.

7. Power of instructional videos

Previously, teachers would lecture just once on a topic, and students may miss valuable content. Teachers have become more proficient in creating these valuable resources that students can access over and over again to make sure they understand.

8. Power of communication

The pandemic has forced teachers to communicate more regularly in a variety of ways, whether it's clearly communicating learning expectations, answering questions, providing feedback, or keeping parents informed.

9. Re-evaluating our practices

This time has shined the light on how we are teaching, and we've learned that we can't just translate what we did in-person to a virtual environment. We have been able to focus on mastery of the most important aspects and have changed how we use class time from providing subject content to more time spent applying that content.

10. Experience and comfort with technology

While none of us would claim to be experts, all teachers have gotten more comfortable with technology of all types. In fact, teachers need to be commended. In most schools, they had only a week to prepare for virtual learning. In true teacher form, they made it happen.

Donor RECOGNITION

Private support from the Owen Foundation and Joyce Gillie Gossom '78 accelerates opportunity across the College of Education.

The Owen Foundation was established in 1994 by Richard Owen and his wife Frances "Fran" Owen. Richard was owner and CEO of Bloomington's Owen Nursery Enterprises until his passing in 2011. Fran, their son Brent Alsman, and daughter Andrea Beyer carry on his legacy through the foundation.



Owen family, *from left*, Brent Alsman, Anastasia Alsman, Fran Owen, Andrea Beyer, and Bradley Beyer

"Education is costly," said Fran. "School budgets often don't cover special projects or school renovations. That has to come from donors."

Foundation gifts transformed ISU's weight room—now the Owen Strength and Conditioning Center. The foundation also helped revamp Metcalf's Hayden Auditorium and has contributed significant funds towards a future renovation of University High School's science laboratories.

"Finding innovative ways to teach contributes to students' success," said Brent. He hopes the upcoming renovations will foster more hands-on, collaborative learning.

Though family members are not alumni, they maintain strong ties to ISU and its Laboratory Schools because of their belief in giving back. "I want to support the community that has supported me," said Brent.

The family also enjoys Redbird Athletics. "I'm a fan whether they're winning or losing. I don't give up on them," said Fran, who finds joy in giving back. "It's a privilege to improve the lives of children."

Dr. Joyce Gillie Gossom '78 chose ISU after writing then Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare Caspar Weinberger for advice in selecting a university. She decided to study special education after witnessing a special education teacher mistreating students in the school where her mother was an administrator. The teacher was terminated, and the experience ignited in Gossom a lifelong pursuit of equity and justice.

Since earning a special education degree, Gossom has gone from teacher to management consultant to instructional designer and program development supervisor for Georgia Power Company.

Today she is The Princess (aka President) of Best Gurl consulting firm, which provides assessments and solutions for corporations, education, and nonprofits. She uses skills learned at Illinois State.

"I was taught how to look at any problem; diagnose and analyze what the underlying causes of the problem were, not just the symptoms; conduct research and figure out what to do to address the underlying causes," said Gossom, who legally changed her name to be lowercase, a nod to her connection with the poetry of e.e. cummings.

She was a student representative on Illinois State's Student Code Enforcement Review Board. As a first-year teacher, she earned a leadership role on the school's community partners committee. As associate dean for University of West Florida Emerald Coast, she broadened the campus' reach and increased access to education.



Dr. Joyce Gillie Gossom

It was through Gossom's commitment to equity and her gratitude to ISU that she committed \$25,000 to establish the Joyce Gillie Gossom Endowed Scholarship for Students in the Special Education Program. The scholarship aids students demonstrating financial need, with preference given to a Chicago Public Schools graduate.

"I want to make possible an education for someone who may not have the advantage, but has the ability," said Gossom, who was a philanthropist at an early age. When she was 10 she organized a neighborhood carnival that raised \$300 for muscular dystrophy research. She still sees giving back as a responsibility she gladly accepts.

"My mother encouraged me to not just sit there and cry about an injustice, but to do something about it," Gossom said.

Learn more about College of Education funding priorities and make your gift today. Visit Giving.IllinoisState.edu/opportunities/college-education or contact Wilma Bates at (309) 438-4304 or wbates@IllinoisState.edu.



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Tony Nicolalde

Tony Nicolalde is a child of Deaf immigrants and a first-generation college student. With support from the Class of 1986 Scholarship, Nicolalde is pursuing his dream of becoming a special education teacher for the Deaf.

"My scholarship has really pushed me forward to do my best in academics," said Nicolalde, who told his scholarship donors, "I promise to not let you down on achieving my goals. Thank you for giving me this scholarship. I will never forget your generosity."

Dual alum and University High School teacher Kirsten Hany '03, M.S. '14 is pursuing a doctoral degree from Illinois State University. Hany's parents are also alums, and her father, Richard Schertz '74, a former Redbird Football defensive end and outside linebacker, was inducted into the Illinois State Athletics Percy Family Hall of Fame in 1979. The Bon Accord Award Hany received has enhanced her doctoral research into trauma informed practices in secondary classrooms.

"I am passionate about using technology to integrate best practice research into classrooms," Hany said. "This gift will allow me to work with a software developer to create a platform for students to learn mindfulness techniques and cope with trauma."

Learn more about Nicolalde and Hany at [News.Illinoisstate.edu/giving](https://news.illinoisstate.edu/giving). To create a scholarship within the College of Education, visit [Giving.IllinoisState.edu/opportunities/college-education](https://giving.IllinoisState.edu/opportunities/college-education) or contact Wilma Bates at wbates@IllinoisState.edu or (309) 438-4304.



Kirsten Hany '03, M.S. '14

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