

Early Childhood Assessment Review Panel

CORE has carefully chosen a diverse group of early learning and assessment experts to serve on the panel of reviewers. Reviewers are both researchers and practitioners and represent a wide range of disciplines including research methodology, statistics, education, and psychology.

Panelists

Abbreviated Bio



Akihito Kamata, Ph.D.
Southern Methodist University
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Psychometrics and educational measurement.

Dr. Kamata is the Executive Director at the Center on Research and Evaluation (CORE). Dr. Kamata's primary research interest is psychometrics and educational and psychological measurement, focusing on implementation of item-level test data analysis methodology through various modeling framework, including item response theory, multilevel modeling, and structural equation modeling. He did pioneering work on multilevel item response theory modeling, where item response data from individuals are nested within group units, such as schools.



Stephanie Al Otaiba, Ph.D.
Southern Methodist University
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Literacy interventions, RTI, diverse learners.

Dr. Al Otaiba joined Southern Methodist University in January 2012 as Professor of Teaching and Learning in the Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education & Human Development. Dr. Al Otaiba's research interests include school-based literacy interventions, response to intervention, learning disabilities, diverse learners, and teacher training. Dr. Al Otaiba has served on review panels for grants for the Institute of Education Science and has reviewed for the Office of Special Education Programs. She was recently elected the Vice President of the Division for Learning Disabilities of the Council for Exceptional Children.



Doris Luft Baker, Ph.D.
Southern Methodist University
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Instruction and assessment of English Learners.

An Assistant Professor at the Simmons School at SMU, Doris Luft Santos Baker is engaged in developing and evaluating instructional tools and assessments in English and in Spanish designed to improve and monitor the academic performance of English learners. She has also provided professional development and consultation to parents, teachers, and researchers in the United States, and in Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Spain, Finland, and Qatar. Dr. Baker was born in Brazil, and grew up in Colombia and Mexico.



Nathan Clemens, Ph.D.
University of Texas at Austin
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Assessment-based intervention for early reading difficulties.

Dr. Clemens is an Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education within the College of Education and The University of Texas. Dr. Clemens' research and teaching focuses on improving instruction and intervention for students with reading difficulties in preschool through adolescence. Dr. Clemens is also interested in research that seeks to better understand interventions and key practices that are effective for students with the most intensive learning difficulties.





Chelsea Harned
Uplift Education
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Curriculum and assessment administration – Public Charter schools.

Ms. Harned serves as a Curriculum Coordinator for grades K-2 within the Central Management Office at Uplift Education. Ms. Harned oversees development and leadership of professional development sessions for 250 teachers on instructional practices and data analysis and data-driven lesson planning. In addition to leading teachers, Ms. Harned creates common assessments for K-2 students in math, reading, and writing aligned to the TEKS and evaluates network data on common assessments to improve network curricular documents and teacher training.



George Holden, Ph.D.
Southern Methodist University
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Developmental psychology.

A developmental psychologist, Dr. Holden is a noted expert on parenting, discipline and family violence. He can discuss social development as it relates to parent-child relationships. A fellow of the American Psychological Society, he is past president of the Society for the Research in Human Development and is also a member of the American Psychological Association, the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) and the International Society on the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect (ISPCAN).



Derek Little
Dallas Independent School District
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Public school administration; Asst. Sup. of Early Learning at Dallas ISD.

Mr. Little serves as the Assistant Superintendent in the Early Learning Department within the Dallas Independent School District and as co-PI on a proposed research partnership with CORE to study the effects of a robust professional development system being implemented. Mr. Little was the deputy director of early childhood at the Louisiana Department of Education, where he led policy planning for funding, accountability, enrollment, workforce, and governance of early childhood programs. Mr. Little began his career teaching high school math.



Dominique McCain
Dallas Independent School District
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Director of instructional and assessment strategy for early learning.

Ms. McCain is the Director of Instructional Strategy for Early Learning within the Dallas Independent School District. She has strong system leadership experience, having recently directed Dallas ISD's alternative certification and teacher residency program - Compass. With teaching and leadership experience across grade levels, Ms. McCain now oversees a unified strategy for early learning curriculum, assessment, professional development and instructional resources.





Angela Mcilveene
Dallas Independent School District
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Expert early childhood classroom teacher.

Mrs. Mcilveene has spent the last ten years serving as an ESL/general education kindergarten classroom teacher for Dallas Independent School District. Ms. Mcilveene's experience and current placement in a Texas public school provides a unique insight to the utility and application of assessment from the perspective of the end-user, an educator. Ms. Mcilveene also serves as a campus coordinator to train teacher colleagues on how to use progress monitoring assessments in the classroom.



Sarah Powell, Ph.D.
University of Texas at Austin
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Instruction and assessment of early mathematics.

Sarah R. Powell is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Special Education within the College of Education at The University of Texas. Powell was a National Academy of Education/Spencer Postdoctoral Fellow from 2014 to 2016, and she is currently a Faculty Fellow with the Greater Texas Foundation. Powell's research interests include developing and testing interventions for students with mathematics difficulties, with a special emphasis on peer tutoring, word-problem solving, mathematics writing, and the symbols and vocabulary within mathematics.



Cynthia Puranik, Ph.D.
Georgia State University
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Emergent and early writing development.

Dr. Puranik is an associate professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders in the College of Education and Human Development. In addition, Puranik is an affiliate faculty of the Research on the Challenges of Acquiring Language and Literacy initiative at Georgia State University. Her research focuses on understanding early writing development — including assessment and instruction of early writing skills. She has simultaneously explored both basic theoretical and highly applied research pathways to address questions pertaining to children's emergent and early conventional writing.



Karen Thierry, Ph.D.
Momentous Institute
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Social and emotional development in applied school settings.

Dr. Thierry is the Director of Research and Evaluation at The Momentous Institute in Dallas, Texas. Dr. Thierry has worked in research and evaluation for over fifteen years, with a focus on children's social and cognitive development and the application of research and theory in these areas to applied settings (e.g., education, social work, law). She has worked with various organizations including the National Institutes of Health, Rutgers University and the Dallas Independent School District.





Kara Waddell

Child Care Associates

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Administration of early childhood federal and state resources.

Ms. Waddell is the President and CEO of Child Care Associates in Fort Worth, Texas. Previously in Oregon, she served as the state's child care administrator overseeing the state's system of licensing, launched the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System, reinvigorated the state's Resource and Referral system, and directed the state's \$120m child care subsidy system. She spearheaded the writing of a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant securing over \$35m for the state. Ms. Waddell served at the pleasure of the Governor on Oregon's Early Learning Council.



Paul Yovanoff, Ph.D.

Southern Methodist University

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Psychometrics and educational measurement – special education.

Dr. Yovanoff was a special education teacher. He has remained active in the field as a professor of educational research and measurement methodologies applied in special education contexts. In addition to numerous publications and conference presentations, Dr. Yovanoff consults routinely with government and research institutions. Current research interests include psychometric modeling of assessments for special populations, specification of optimal cut-scores for classification decisions, and culturally sensitive measurement and assessment for educational decisions.

