



Ecology of School Readiness Lab

Mission – to examine the factors that impact young children's school success and to communicate our findings to practitioners and policy makers

The Ecology of School Readiness Research Lab News

VOLUME 2

Our mission is to examine the factors that impact young children's school success and to communicate our findings to practitioners and policy makers

PROJECT UPDATES

Conversation Compass

The Conversation Compass approach is a conversation-based instructional approach designed to build teachers' planning around instructional conversations, to strengthen children's communication skills, and to foster peer-to-peer conversations in the classroom.

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This month, members of the Conversation Compass Project team worked to prepare the manuscript for submission for peer review.

ACSES

The Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) is a measure designed to evaluate teacher-child interactions and assess interpersonal processes within the classroom environment.

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Members of the ACSES team worked this month to solidify the items for the ACSES Global score sheet and will be training people for coding purposes at the end of May.

Teachers' Language Practices with DLL Students

Bilingual Preschool Teachers' Language Practices with Their Dual Language Learner Students investigates how teachers use Spanish and English with their DLL students in small group versus whole group settings as well as how often and for what purposes teachers code switch.

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This month, members of the team drafted a coding scheme for the function of teacher code-switching and finished the transcripts for data analysis.

Reading, Relationships & Racial Equity

The Reading, Racial Equity, & Relationships study is designed to ultimately improve children's 3rd grade reading scores, as well as help children and youth thrive throughout development.

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This month, members of the Reading, Relationships & Racial Equity team met with community partners in Pittsburgh and continued to draft ideas about the scope of the project.

Where will you see us next?

All events have been cancelled due to COVID-19.
We hope to have event updates soon.



Wheelock College of Education & Human Development
Center on the Ecology of Early Development



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This issue’s interview:

Lab member Sabrina Huang looks forward to teaching internationally

Sabrina Huang, with the ESR Lab since November of 2017, is graduating Boston University this semester. She has been accepted to teach English starting in the fall for both the Fulbright Program and the Japan Exchange and Teaching Program. This month, we highlight Sabrina’s time in the lab and future endeavors.

Can you tell us a little bit about each program you’ve been accepted into?

“I got accepted into the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program and the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Program. The Fulbright Program is devoted to increasing mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people of other countries. It is the world’s largest and most diverse international exchange program, and the grant is made possible through funds appropriated annually by the U.S. Congress, and in many cases, by contributions from partner countries and private parties. The Fulbright Program places ETAs in classrooms abroad to provide assistance to the local English teachers, while serving as cultural ambassadors for the United States. The JET Program is a similar program to the Fulbright ETA in that it places Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in schools, boards of education, and government offices throughout Japan. It is the only teaching exchange program managed by the government of Japan, and offers ALTs the opportunity to participate in cultural exchange and meet people from all over the world while living and working in Japan.”

What was your motivation behind applying to both of these programs?

“I am committed to promoting equal access to quality education. My pursuit of dual degrees in education and history along with many experiences outside of the classroom have confirmed that education is a catalyst to social and economic mobility. I recently completed my full-time student teaching experience in a 7th grade history classroom. In my student teaching evaluation, one of my 7th graders wrote, “Ms. Huang is very nice and funny. She’s a really good teacher who helps us learn in a fun understanding way. She likes to giggle a lot, which makes me giggle too. She really explains things well and if you don’t understand, she’ll come over and help you understand. Sometimes, our class will get a little crazy, but she’ll allow us to learn and still have bunches of fun!” I believe this student’s statement accurately represents my student teaching experience, where I was comfortable being myself around my students, and learned how to tailor my lessons to their backgrounds and interests. My courses, research, leadership roles, and classroom teaching experience have taught me to be sensitive to my students’ backgrounds and learning styles. I want to bring what I have learned from all of my prior teaching experiences into an experience teaching abroad so that I will also have the opportunity to be immersed in and learn more about another culture. My ultimate life goal is to become a foreign service officer, or diplomat, representing the United States. Foreign service officers often work to educate the public, whether that means directly interacting with the native population in another country, speaking in press conferences about the political or economic situation in the country, or assisting American citizens in distress while abroad. I have a strong desire for bridging gaps across cultures with empathy and an open-mind. These two programs will allow me to combine both my interests in cultural exchange and teaching.”



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What are you most excited about these opportunities?

“I am really excited about the opportunity to live in another country for a year and serve as a cultural ambassador representing the United States. I did not have the opportunity to study abroad during my four years at Boston University, since I was concerned about being able to fit in all the coursework I needed to pursue my dual degree in Wheelock and the College of Arts and Sciences in four years. I wanted to be able to write a senior thesis in History, and also complete my student teaching for my Social Studies Education degree, so I missed my chance to study abroad (which would have had to be done during my freshman or sophomore year). My family is from Taiwan and during my time at BU, I have made a lot of friends who are from both Taiwan and Japan. I hope that I will be able to visit them in their respective countries during my time abroad. I am also currently writing my senior honors thesis on the Taiwan Relations Act, so it will be really fulfilling to be able to visit Taiwan after having spent the past year researching the history of China/Taiwan relations and U.S./Taiwan relations.”

What do you hope to gain from the experience?

“Since both the Fulbright and JET programs will give me the chance to teach abroad for a year, I hope that I will be able to further develop my teaching skills. For my Social Studies Education degree, I completed my pre-practicum in an 11th grade AP U.S. History class, and my full-time student teaching practicum in a 7th grade Ancient World History class. While I took one Sheltered English Immersion course at BU to be certified in teaching history to English Language Learners, I have not taken any classes on teaching English to elementary or middle schoolers. I am hoping that I will be able to use some of what I have learned at BU, such as from the classroom management course, as well as my practical experience from being in classrooms during my pre-practicum and practicum experiences, making lesson plans, and grading student work, to help me with teaching English abroad. Through this experience, I hope that I will be able to connect with students and become an effective teacher as well as cultural ambassador representing the United States. If I choose to go to Taiwan, I am hoping that my Mandarin will improve significantly, and I hope that I will be able to learn more about Taiwanese culture. If I choose to go to Japan, I hope that I will be able to learn Japanese to effectively have conversations with other teachers and members of the community I am placed in.”

What was the most valuable lesson/opportunity/skill you gained while working in the lab?

“The most valuable skill I have developed while working in the lab is self-motivation and the ability to work independently. Dr. Curenton and Jacqueline have graciously guided me immensely through all of my achievements related to my work in the lab, but I think it was my intrinsic motivation that caused me to constantly seek out new opportunities to pursue. During my time in the lab, I had the opportunity to present research posters at two undergraduate research conferences by analyzing data from our Conversation Compass project. The first poster, presented at the 21st Annual Undergraduate Research (UROP) Symposium at Boston University, analyzed whether teachers or children talked more in a preschool classroom. My second poster which was presented at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR), held at Kennesaw State University in Georgia, explored how mental state words were used in two different preschool classroom settings: a dual-language learner small group read aloud and a mixed-language small group art activity. For the purpose of this project, a “dual-language learner” meant that the child spoke both English and Spanish. “Mixed-language” groups composed of students who were dual language and other students who only speak English at home. I have received funding from BU’s Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) to support my research in the lab. I received a





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Faculty Matching Grant during the Fall 2018 semester to work on the Conversation Compass research, and a Conference Participation Travel Award in Spring 2019 to present at NCUR. Last semester, I wrote a 19-paged research paper analyzing mental state talk in a Head Start preschool in New Jersey. My results found that mental state talk is closely related to children's development of social skills and understanding that other people may have behaviors and perspectives that are different from their own. My research on mental state talk has been included in our lab's discourse analysis paper, which also analyzes other aspects of conversation, such as using cognitively challenging questions and analyzing turn-taking between teachers and children, that were studied by Dr. Curenton, Jacqueline, and Niya. It has recently been accepted as a poster presentation at the National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC) and as a paper to the annual American Educational Research Association (AERA) meeting."

Where do you see yourself in five years?

"My dream career is to become a Foreign Service Officer, or diplomat representing the United States. The idea of having a career as a cultural representative of my country and being given the opportunity to promote peace, prosperity, and stability, while advancing the interests of the U.S. abroad strongly appeals to me. However, I have also recently become interested in pursuing law. I volunteered at the Edward W. Brooke Courthouse in downtown Boston during my junior and senior years. This is a trial court, and I interned in the Boston Court Service Center. Self-represented litigants who can not afford legal representation enter the Court Service Center for assistance with their family and housing law cases. When litigants come in through our doors, they are often in distress and emotionally unstable. Oftentimes, they come in telling me their life story and ask for assistance in filing for a divorce, answering an eviction complaint and summons, or addressing child custody and child support issues. It is my role to listen to their story and figure out what the best way to help these litigants are and which trial court paperwork will work best in assisting their case. Working at the courthouse taught me that compassion and understanding can have a lasting impact on other people's lives. Regardless of what I choose to pursue after my year abroad doing Fulbright or the JET Program, I hope that I will be able to do meaningful work that has an impact on helping others."

What was your favorite task in the lab?

"Given that I have been a research assistant in the lab since my sophomore year, I honestly loved that Dr. Curenton and Jacqueline entrusted me with the responsibility to train and mentor newer members of the lab. Even though my peers in the lab often texted, emailed, or FaceTimed me outside of my lab hours, I really liked how everyone thought to come to me with their questions and am glad that I was often able to help with the issues, whether they were technical issues or just general questions regarding new ideas related to the research we are doing."

What will you miss most on the BU campus?

"I am going to miss the people I have met at BU the most. I am really grateful to all my professors and mentors in both the College of Arts and Sciences and the Wheelock College of Education and Human Development. I have truly grown as an individual, both academically and professionally, during my time at BU. I will also miss all the friends I have made through clubs, classes, and the lab. Most of all, I will miss how convenient BU's campus is. Where else will I have access to have eight T stations spanning the Charles River Campus, from Kenmore to Babcock, each about a block or at most, two blocks, away from each other?"

