

# Teaching the teachers

A look into practice-based research on professional development in local school districts.



Conducting controlled studies on professional development in schools isn't very easy to do, according to Dr. Linda Symcox. But, within the last several years, EDLD students have gotten the chance to be a part of two grants to do just that- and do their dissertations on the studies.

"The dissertations are not just theoretical pieces ... but really look at the effects of the grants that are trying to make improvements," Dr. Symcox said. "The whole idea behind this is that these dissertations come to life, they impact practice, they impact people. So it's not just sitting there on the shelf, these are

alive and helping in the real world."

The Bechtel Foundation granted nearly \$1 million to train elementary teachers in STEM subjects. The professional development was funded entirely by the grant.

"It was a unique project because we had master-teachers being trained simultaneously with pre-service teachers," Dr. Symcox said. "And usually with professional development, the schoolteachers would have their own and the pre-service would have their college classes."

Dr. Symcox was part of the faculty who helped write the grants and oversaw the EDLD students. Most

grants have an evaluator at the end, so with the Bechtel grant, they decided to have dissertation students be the evaluators, because it funds them and they write an entire dissertation, rather than a smaller evaluation, she said.

Cohort 6 graduates Dr. Michael Trimmell and Dr. Stacy Benuzzi did their dissertations on this study. Dr. Trimmell studied the Master teachers and Dr. Benuzzi studied the student teachers.

Dr. Trimmell has always had a love for science and for leadership, so when he heard of the opportunity to apply to work on the grant, he went for it. When he was accepted,

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# Cohort 1 grad recognized



Mayor Robert Garcia is recognized as the distinguished alumnus for the College of Education.

**DR. ROBERT GARCIA**, 36, is an accomplished educator and Mayor of the City of Long Beach. He was elected the 28th Mayor of Long Beach on June 3, 2014.

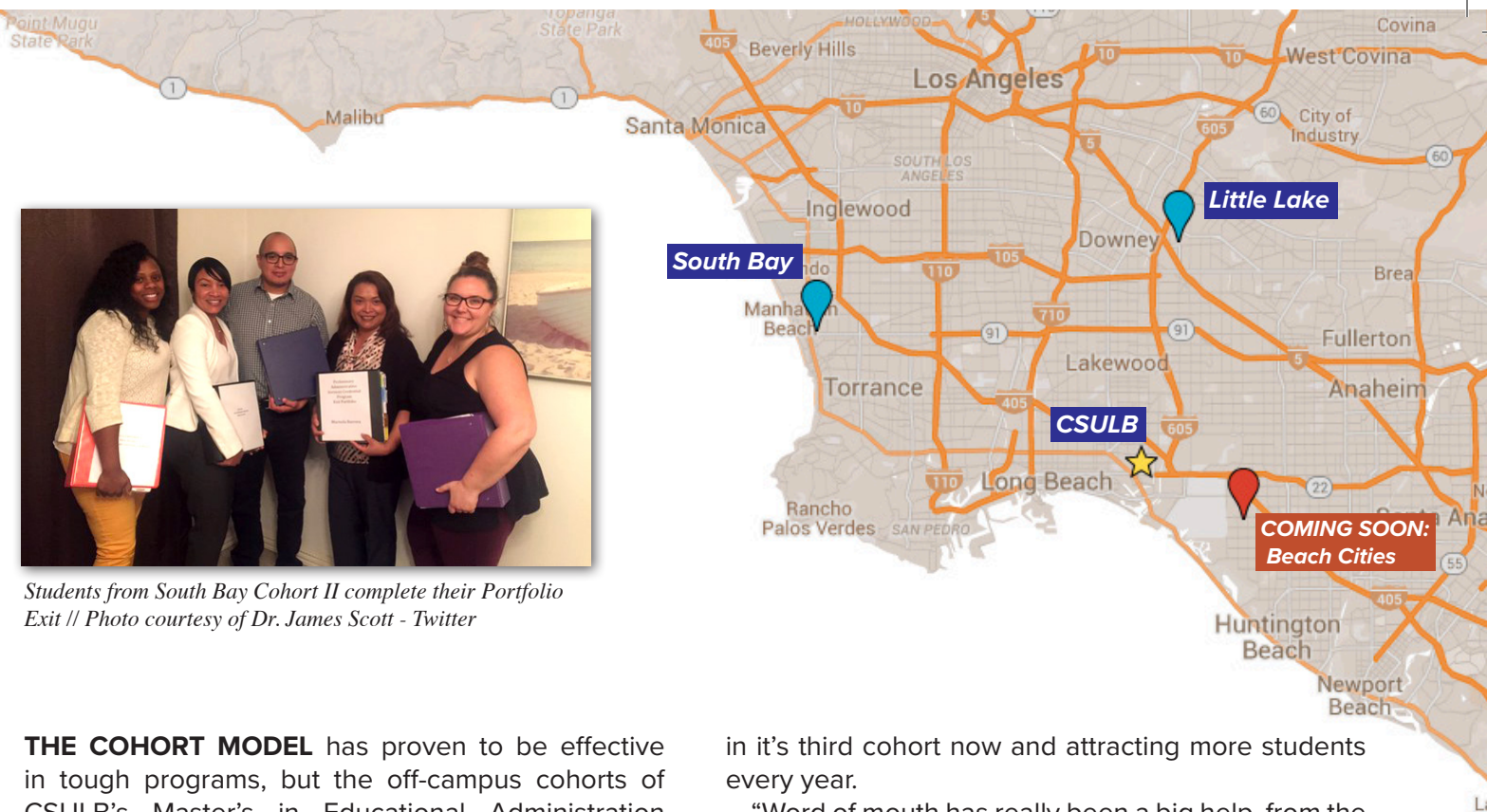
Dr. Garcia has taken a leadership role in balancing the city budget, reforming pensions, expanding park space and investing in technology. He is committed to moving Long Beach forward by attracting tech and green jobs, creating new educational partnerships and rebuilding our aging streets, sidewalks and alleys.

He is a member of the public policy and communications faculty at the University of Southern California, and has taught Communication Studies at both California State University, Long Beach and Long Beach City College.

Dr. Garcia's passion for education led him to pursue a Doctorate in Higher Education, which he was awarded in 2010 after publishing his dissertation on California's Master Plan for Education. He also holds a Master's Degree in Communication Management from the University of Southern California and a Bachelor's Degree in Communication Studies from CSULB.

He was born in Lima, Peru, and immigrated to the United States at age 5 with his family. He grew up in Covina, California and was raised by three strong women in his life: his mother, grandmother and aunt. Dr. Garcia was the first person in his family to attend and graduate college. While at CSULB, Robert was elected student body president.

His previous public service includes serving as a California Coastal Commissioner, as well as Long Beach Councilmember and Vice Mayor.



Students from South Bay Cohort II complete their Portfolio Exit // Photo courtesy of Dr. James Scott - Twitter

**THE COHORT MODEL** has proven to be effective in tough programs, but the off-campus cohorts of CSULB’s Master’s in Educational Administration program take it a step further. These cohorts meet at a location off-campus that’s closer to where students may work or live, so they don’t have to brave the 405 freeway at 5 p.m. to get to class after work.

“We’re attracting students who are so busy being leaders in their schools, that they might not have the time to be able to navigate to the on-campus program,” Dr. James Scott said. “By locating it in closer proximity to where they work, it allows them to be able to balance work, personal life and school a little bit easier.”

Students in off-campus cohorts take all the same classes as their on-campus peers and many are taught by EDLD alumni. The students meet for class once a week at their cohort location.

The addition to the EDAD program came in 2012 when Dr. Scott asked then-EDLD student, Dr. Karina Gerger, Ed.D Cohort 5, if her district might be interested in hosting an off-campus cohort. EDAD had a similar program with Long Beach Unified School District, but it ended in 2009 due to budget cuts.

With the help of the Graduate Studies office and Dr. Gerger, who was also an employee of the district, the South Bay cohort was launched at the Manhattan Beach school district office. She is now a liaison between her district and the program. South Bay is

in its third cohort now and attracting more students every year.

“Word of mouth has really been a big help, from the people who were in the program to other teachers in their district, it has just taken off,” Dr. Gerger said.

The Little Lake cohort started in fall of 2015 and meets at Lake Center Middle School. Dr. Michael Trimmell, Ed.D Cohort 6, serves as an adjunct professor and as a liaison to the program and district.

Other than the advantage of convenience for students, Dr. Trimmell says he sees the advantage of easier collaboration among students in neighboring districts.

“It’s not like we’re all in different counties, we’re all in the same area, with similar socioeconomic status of the communities, we have similar challenges and similar opportunities,” Dr. Trimmell said. “So it works well when you have a cohort with similar challenges so you can talk through them and work through them and get and give ideas.”

A third cohort will soon be added to the list. The Beach Cities cohort will begin in fall 2016 at the Huntington Beach Union High School District office.

“It’s really good for the university to be out in the field,” Dr. Scott said. “I think it’s great that Long Beach State is in the South Bay, in Little Lake, in Huntington Beach and that we’re developing leadership in more places.”

## Off-campus cohorts offer localized leadership

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his research asked what the effect of STEM-rich professional development was on teachers' self-efficacy in teaching science. He used a mixed-method approach to study the master-teachers.

"So I wanted to know: was there a difference in the self-efficacy between those who participated in the STEM professional development and those who that didn't?" Dr. Trimmell said. "And I also wanted to know to what extent do other factors influence teachers' sense of self-efficacy? In the literature, it talked a lot about teachers' knowledge about science, their pre-service knowledge, their professional development, their interpersonal support, and then also the principal instructional leadership and their support. The literature spoke to those four things but I wanted to know how do those things affect see teacher self-efficacy as well."

He found that the STEM-rich professional development was extremely beneficial in increasing the teachers' sense of self-efficacy in teaching science. He used the STEBI (Science Teaching Efficacy and Belief Instrument) survey tool and

measured that the improvement in self-efficacy was statistically significant in growth.

A negative result that came out in his study, was that teachers felt there was a lack of support from instructional leaders, and that was one of the reasons why self-efficacy was so low when it came to teaching science.

"I learned a lot as a leader myself and was able to put into my work some implications for leaders in terms of how leaders can better support science instruction through increased funding, through increased professional development and just an overall increase in support for science at their site."

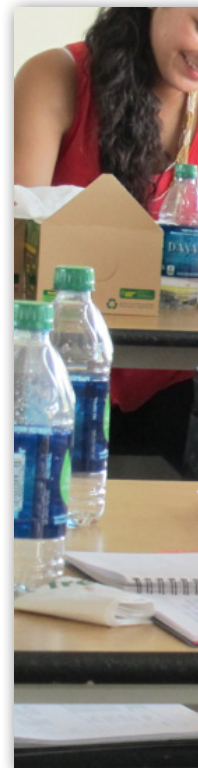
## 100Kn10

The other grant was from the 100Kn10 Foundation and funded a study in the Little Lake school district, where half the teachers were given professional development in math and half were not. They were able to run a randomly assigned controlled quantitative study and look at how it affected the teachers and the kids. Dr. Jennifer Kolb, Ed.D Cohort 6, interviewed the teachers and principals in a qualitative study.

"The ability to pull out a whole school, across different sites, different schools working together on something is incredible," Dr. Symcox said. "That opportunity is not available unless you have a grant."

Dr. Kolb's research looked at the effectiveness of lesson-study as a means of professional development for teachers to implement the new Common Core math standards. She attended the professional development cycles, trainings and observations of the lesson-study professional development.

Lesson-study is a professional development philosophy that started in Japan. It starts with researching an area of curriculum that will be studied, then collaboratively planning a lesson with other



*Professional development photos courtesy of Dr. Linda Symcox.*

# Profession



teachers in the same grade level, then developing a lesson that will meet the students' needs. Then, one of the teachers will teach the lesson to a class that is typically not their own, with the other teachers observing the students. The teachers then debrief and rework the lesson based on the debrief and the teachers go back to their own classrooms to teach the reworked lesson.

"One of the things that I was looking for was to see if the lesson study contributed in the teacher's ability to develop mathematical reasoning in their students, which is one of the focuses of the mathematical practices"

Dr. Kolb also gathered teacher input to see how they felt the lesson study supported them as far as a means of professional development. The teachers didn't have a choice if they were to participate or not, and as with anything that's new, there was resistance at first, but the teachers were all happy with it in the end, she said.

"They actually found that it was very different and it was not a model of where people were talking at

them, but more directed by [the teachers] and they thought that was very beneficial," Dr. Kolb said. "The results of my study showed that there was an impact on their ability to implement the standards and the practices, but as far as it being a significant difference, it's going to take some time."

The teachers participating in the study expressed their excitement about what they were learning and wanted to share the lesson-study methods with other teachers, but they knew they could not taint the research. In the end, the district took the principals and the teachers that didn't participate (the control group) and gave them the training the following year.

"We saw that it is possible for teachers have more of a say in the way they design their lessons," Dr. Kolb said. "It also brought back the importance of looking at students and thinking about: the lesson isn't for the teacher, the lesson is for the students and if we really want the students to learn, we have to make sure that they're giving them something meaningful that they can learn from."

# Professional development in action

ADVANCED CREDENTIAL STUDENT



GRADUATE STUDENT & THESIS



# Outstanding students

**ROSE AHRENS** is currently an Assistant Principal at Manhattan Beach Middle School. She studied Business Administration at Whittier College and worked in the software gaming industry for several years before getting her teaching credential at Chapman University.

She taught at the elementary level for 15 years before becoming a Teacher on Special Assignment: Writing and Literacy and piggy-backed that experience into her current position with her recent completion of the Administrative Credential at CSULB.

Rose is enjoying this new adventure as an administrator providing guidance, support and leadership to teachers, students and parents.

**DOMINICA SCIBETTA** is currently the Assistant Director for TRIO Student Support Services at CSULB. She completed her undergraduate degree in Communication Theory and Sociology from Vanguard University. After assuming a position in Veteran's Affairs at a private 4-year university, she discovered her calling – student affairs.

Dominica is a recent graduate of the M.S. in Counseling, option in Student Development in Higher Education. To maintain a local and global perspective, she actively partners with non-profit agencies and community groups, and has served as a youth counselor for the AIDS Services Foundation and helped establish the Young Professionals Council for the LBGT Center OC.

*Photos and bios courtesy of each student, edited for style and space.*

# Becoming the 'Linked Leader'

Dr. Chandalee Wood and her experience  
using her dissertation in her career.

**WHEN DR. CHANDALEE WOOD** asked the question of how Linked Learning pathways impact the principals of the schools that implement the pathways in her dissertation, she didn't realize she would eventually become a leader who would oversee the transformations firsthand.

Dr. Wood, Ed.D Cohort 6, is now the Senior Director of Alternative Education for the Monterey County Office of Education and she is overseeing the implementation of two pilot pathways that are striving to be Linked Learning pathways.

She was hired with the intention of working toward a Linked Learning model. She works with a staff of two principals, a college and career readiness coordinator and several case managers. This year, they began two programs: iTAP, which stands for Innovative Technology Art Pathway and their transportation pathway SAFE: Sea, Air, Fire, Earth.

"We used my knowledge of the Linked Learning model and matrix for criteria and a lot of the information I learned from my dissertation regarding what it takes to lead and how to transform a current state of being as a department into a pathway program," Dr. Wood said.

Her dissertation was titled: "The Linked Leader: Principal Perceptions of Leadership in High Schools Implementing Linked Learning Pathways" and asked how the transformation and sustainability of certified Linked Learning pathways has impacted the leadership role, responsibility and approach of high school principals of the schools.

"I wanted to know: how does a principal have to be different if they're going to have these types of pathways in their school?" Dr. Wood said.

She determined in her final analysis that every principal who is involved in a Linked Learning pathway views their leadership through their perception of what Dr. Wood called their "shared intentions." They don't find themselves to be doing the decision-making

all alone, they approach it collaboratively.

To illustrate her findings, Dr. Wood created a helix with two main strands: Transformation and Sustainability. Within those two cycles are the concepts of the principal being a community bridge, a risk-taker and a supporter.

"My role at this point is to really support my principal and to make sure they have everything they need because their role as a principal is to support these teachers who have come together in these small groups and are running the pathway programs," Dr. Wood said. "And how that trickles down: if I stop supporting, then the principals can't support like they need to and the teachers are left with a program that won't be sustainable."

The two programs, iTAP and SAFE, are alternative education programs that work with at-risk youth, with one of the schools they work on being a juvenile hall campus. Both pathways have community partners that include local community colleges, industry partners and non-profits. One non-profit that works with SAFE is Every Kid Can Fly, where students learn airport dispatching and flying. The students work with the community partners weekly and learning job skills from them.

"With the 'risk-taker rule' of what I believe is part of principal leadership with Linked Learning pathways is to take chances, and to do things that may shake up things a little bit," Dr. Wood said. "It's not everyday you see high schoolers flying planes outside."

This year in August, Dr. Wood's office will be adding another pathway for engineering and information technology.

"I did not anticipate my dissertation having such a great impact on my profession," Dr. Wood said. "... I have to say I've been super stoked about the fact that all of that work I did has such an immediate impact on not only my profession, but I have the information readily available now because of my research and study, to help the principals and staff who work with me."




Photo courtesy of Dr. Wood.

# Congratulations 2016 graduates

## **MASTER of Science in STUDENT DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Jessica Alvarez  
Anella Aquino  
Alejandra G Ayala  
Douglas Ayala  
Ashley Berry  
Julianne Chang  
Connie Cheng  
Ilinca Filimon  
Urias Garcia  
Jeremy Hansen  
Eileen Jimenez  
Nancy Le  
Marilyn Martinez  
Luis Miranda  
Charlie Nguyen  
Catherine Nunez  
Melinda Patton  
Christopher Perez  
Trixie-Marie Ramoso  
Dominica Scibetta  
Leland Simpliciano  
Will Qui Thai  
Michael Tran  
Princess-Aileen Vickory  
Monet Warren  
Brittany Gray  
Samuel Romero  
Jacqueline Toy  
Michael Warden



## **MASTER of Arts in EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION**

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Julianne Chang  
Angelica Mejia  
John Stephens  
Laura Castro  
John Hoglund  
Randall Saisho  
Denise Grant  
Kevin Greiving  
Tiffany Adream Lee  
Veronica Lucio  
Vanessa Mardueno  
Kathleen Suarez  
Natalie Young  
Katherine DeVries Lasker  
April Baxter  
Monique Gonzalez  
Maria Akea Kinnard  
Laura Lizarzaburu  
Ararath Pena  
Ryan Ramirez  
Nizhona Sandi Tsosie



## **DOCTORATE in EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

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Dr. Erin Biolchino  
Dr. Gabriela Castañeda  
Dr. Paul Ceron  
Dr. Ellie Christov  
Dr. Erin Danks  
Dr. Kirstie DeBiase  
Dr. David Donaldson  
Dr. Bianca Leon  
Dr. Yvette Habrun  
Dr. Rosa Heckenberg  
Dr. Jessika Kim  
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Dr. Isabel Nuñez  
Dr. Bradley Olin  
Dr. Michelle Parra  
Dr. LaKyshia Perez  
Dr. Veronica Perez  
Dr. Erica Thomas

