

# The Werklund Wire



UNIVERSITY OF  
CALGARY

February 2020



## Dive Deeper with Undergraduate Research

In this issue, Dr. Greg Tweedie sits down with Joyce Montemayor, recipient of a Program for Undergraduate Research Award. Joyce is in her second year of the BEd after-degree program with a specialization in English Language Learning. She is currently in her fourth and last field experience teaching Humanities to middle school students.



**Greg:** Tell us a little bit about what you researched. What did you find out?

**Joyce:** I researched strategies teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) implement in their classrooms. As a future teacher, I wanted to focus particularly on teacher experiences working with ELLs who are incredibly diverse and many of whom experience complex trauma due to their migration process. I contextualized my research within the Attachment, Regulation and Competency (ARC) framework, which is a components-based intervention for students and adolescents who suffer from complex trauma. As such, I approached teachers in CBE's LEAD classes to gather their practices and perspectives on the framework. To give a little bit more context, many students in these LEAD classrooms are currently Syrian and Yazidi refugee students who have come to Canada in recent years.

Through literature and data collected from teachers, I found out creative teacher strategies that help to enhance the experiences of these students and support their success, not just in schools but also in their transition to life in Canada. These strategies pertain to how teachers create safe and secure classroom environments, how they teach students to regulate their emotions, and how they restore their students' own sense of control. Furthermore, I identified strategies teachers utilize to deal with the challenges of working with ELLs with complex trauma. Some of these challenges include vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue and so teachers emphasized the importance of self-care, seeking supportive communities, and learning from professional development sessions to gain effective coping strategies.

**Greg:** How do you think this research experience will help you in your future career?

**Joyce:** This research experience allowed me to delve into a topic that is deeply relevant in my teaching profession, especially as a teacher in Alberta where classrooms are increasingly diverse not only in terms of student abilities, but also in student demographic. As teachers, I believe we are life-long learners and the research skills I learned through this experience will only enhance that. Having had the opportunity to engage in educational scholarship encouraged me to remain research-informed in my teaching practice. I learned more about qualitative research methodology under the supervision of a research expert, which enriched my skills in inquiry. It also gave me opportunities to think critically and creatively, and to collaborate and widen my networks in education.

**Greg:** Cool! What was the most challenging part of the research process?

**Joyce:** The timing of the research was the most challenging part, especially because my research required data collection from teachers. I was notified that I received the award in late March when I was in my second practicum. Practicum demanded most of my time and energy so it was challenging to put together the extensive applications required for ethics approval from the University of Calgary and from CBE during this time. Additionally, this process was a waiting game because I needed the green light from one to go ahead with the other. By the time both were approved, it was already June so it was hard to get a hold of teachers as they were getting ready to go on summer vacations.

**Greg:** What advice would you give to other undergraduate students who are intimidated by the thought of applying for a PURE Award?

**Joyce:** To go for it because the answer is always no unless you try! It is intimidating approaching a professor to supervise your research in addition to articulating your interests into a topic that is worthy of formal investigation, but there is support available throughout the whole process! I spoke with people from UPE to help me narrow down my interests and they pointed me to faculty members whose areas of research are related to my interests. Your own professors in your Ed courses are experts, so ask them about their research! Research is not easy, and there will be discouraging moments. My advice is to pick a topic you are passionate about and persevere throughout the process. The whole thing is a learning experience and the unanticipated results such as those connections you make with people in the field and the other opportunities it leads you to are so much more rewarding!



## President's Corner

Hi Werklund!

I hope you are all warm and well! It's Ruth again, and this edition's theme is Self-Love! As pre-service teachers, I am sure many of you are feeling the stress of recent budget cuts. My team and I would like to remind you that we are here for support and please remember to take care of yourselves. At the ESA, we are working towards creating inclusivity within the faculty. We have brought in some board games for de-stress fun times, started coffee Mondays for those Monday blues, brought in snacks for professional development workshops, and will always be open to talking with you about anything, good and bad. We hope to create a community of support and caring between us all. I hope the students about to go into their final practicum for the year (or for their degree!) will have an illuminating, informative, and comprehensive time in their respective schools, and I wish the rest of you the best of luck in exams and final projects. Want to share a story or a thought with us? Email us at [esa@ucalgary.ca](mailto:esa@ucalgary.ca)

It's Aquarius season! Our theme of Self-Love is extra important in this season. Advice: Make sure you give yourself many opportunities to learn something new, get out of your comfort zone, and find ways to express yourself. Avoid: outbursts, impulsiveness, and disconnection!

Until next time,

Ruth Earl

## Upcoming Dates!

March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – Field Experience II begins today

March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020 – Last day to submit your application to graduate

April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – The U of C will be closed from April 10-13 for the Easter long weekend

April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 – Winter Exam Break begins today

## Have Your Voice Heard!

The Werklund Wire is an Undergraduate Programs in Education newsletter, and that means it pertains to all things YOU! Student submissions are not only welcomed, but encouraged! Send us ideas for upcoming stories, or write one yourself! Memes, comics, and articles are also all considered!



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