Oral Defense Announcement
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the co-authored dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Education with an emphasis in Educational Practice

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Equitable Access in Education:
Access to Joy, Choice Options, and Strong Neighborhood Schools

Date: June 19th, 2019
Time: 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Place: Ed Collabitat Classroom (101)

Abstract
The purpose of this co-authored dissertation was to understand equitable access of quality educational opportunities in St. Louis, Missouri. Through the following research, we present a better understanding of equity and access in education from a classroom level, on a school level, and finally, on a regional level. This collection of research is the effort of a group of committed and concerned educators seeking to understand the ways of making quality education accessible for all families, specifically in the areas of school choice, quality neighborhood schools, and play in the classroom. By equitable access, we mean all families being able to participate in and take advantage of appropriate learning opportunities that they need or that are desired. Hollenkamp’s mixed methods research asked the question of how an increase in play and experiential education would impact early childhood learners both academically and social-emotionally and found that students who had opportunities to play at school grew at the same academic rate as peers who did not get to play while also showing higher levels of character development than their non-playing peers. Sanders’ mixed methods research examined enrollment trends in a neighborhood school and the effect of marketing and promoting strategies that work to make the school the desired choice for families in the neighborhood and found definitive ways to attract and retain families in a neighborhood school among other choice options. Schuessler’s mixed methods research examined how school enrollment processes impact equitable access to school choice options for traditionally underserved populations and found a range in the complexity of enrollment practices across schools that resulted in certain choice options being more accessible to underserved families and other options being less accessible. The collective impact of this research has the potential to improve educational outcomes for students on a variety of levels.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Dr. Phyllis Balcerzak, Ph.D., Chairperson
Dr. Matthew Davis, Ph.D., Committee Faculty Member
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