Welcome!

The overall mission of George Mason University’s Applied Developmental Psychology Student Group is to serve the needs of the Applied Developmental Psychology (ADP) students at the University. We work to advance the understanding of the field of developmental psychology, promote our ADP program, provide funding for conference presentations, enhance collaboration between the developmental psychology laboratories, and host social and service activities. If you have any questions about our program, please visit us at adpsyc.gmu.edu/ and www.gmu.edu/org/adpsg/ - or feel free to contact any student or professor!
We want to hear from you!

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns that you would like to share with the faculty, contact your ADP student representatives, Jameela Conway-Turner (jconwayt@masonlive.gmu.edu) and Caitlin Hines (chines@masonlive.gmu.edu). The ADP faculty meets at least once per month, hope to hear from you!
Stay organized. Schedule out what assignments you are going to do every day of the week and try to stick to it. Use a handwritten planner or an electronic one (like Google calendar, or cool Aps like Wonderlist or Evernote) – whichever you prefer to keep you organized.

Meet with your advisor early and often. Your relationship with your advisor, whether you’re a Masters or Doctoral student, is the most important relationship of your graduate career. Make sure you’re cultivating it early, and it will make the rest of your graduate career much easier. Set up weekly or bi-weekly meetings with your advisor, even if just to catch up on the things you have been working on.

Don’t be afraid! If you have a question, don’t hesitate to ask anyone! Graduate students (especially in our department) are like a family, we help each other out and want to learn from each other’s mistakes.

Don’t procrastinate…yes, let’s all just admit it….we’ve been there, you’ve been there, and it always stinks! As graduate students, we are expected to balance many different responsibilities at once, and excel at all of them. This is an extremely difficult task on its own, so don’t leave assignments for the last minute. This will ensure that you are able to complete all your responsibilities, and come out standing on the other end.

Stay healthy and active. Graduate school can be one of the most fun, but also most stressful life experiences. Don’t let yourself become victim to the severe negative consequences of stress. Make sure you schedule in some “you-time”. Go for a run or a hike, bake cran-oat chocolate chip coconut muffins, play with puppies, make fish tacos, take a yoga class, go to Sweetgreen and get a deliciously overpriced salad…whatever it is that you like to do that relaxes you and keeps you mentally and physically healthy! Get out there and do it!

Make new friends…join study groups, attend social events, don’t be afraid to have a little fun in grad school. Set up study sessions at Panera with a buddy, go to ADPSG planned happy-hours, or just hang out in your lab and get to know your lab-mates. Making friends in graduate school is your first step to developing your social network of colleagues, so get out there and socialize!

Join professional organizations. By joining professional organizations (like SRCD, APA, APS, etc.) you become eligible for discounts to attend conferences, receive journals subscriptions, and you can hear about the latest news in the field. Most of them have student rates too, so us poor-old grad students can afford the hefty bill.

Relatedly, start following your favorite professional organizations on social media. Almost all professional organizations keep and maintain Facebook and Twitter accounts and constantly update them with the latest news, articles, research findings, and cool facts. It’s an excellent way to get your favorite information, fast, simply by browsing your Facebook or Twitter accounts, which, let’s face it, we would all be doing anyway.

Attend conferences. Conferences are usually associated with a professional organization. This is where you can start to build your professional network of collaborators, friends, colleagues, and the like. You never know where these relationships will take you! Submit to them as often as you can, talk with your advisor about potential topics and research ideas that could get you towards a conference submission. There is always something out there that you can do!

Update your CV…OFTEN. Any time you take on a new task or responsibility make sure you are updating your CV ASAP. Graduate school is about taking advantage of the many opportunities that are being thrown at you; make sure you’re giving yourself credit for those opportunities on your professional Vita. Trust me, if you don’t put it on your CV right away, you WILL forget, so update it many times throughout your career to ensure you always have the most up-to-date version. You never know when you’re going to need to whip out your trusty CV and impress someone in an elevator…

Being a TA is important, but don’t let it take over your life. Some graduate students will be asked to be a teaching assistant (TA) for an undergraduate course. This is a very educational, but time-consuming assignment. You will learn A LOT, but it can easily take over all your time, so don’t let it! Get it done, and make it good, but don’t let it take over your life!
**Dr. Danielle Mead**

**Life after graduation**

What are you doing now?
I am a postdoctoral research fellow in the Pediatric and Developmental Neuroscience branch at the National Institute of Mental Health.

What does your day-to-day look like?
Each day tends to vary greatly. My favorite days are spent administering developmental assessments for little ones (mostly 1- to 3-year-olds) who are participating in a study of toddlers at-risk for autism spectrum disorder, but I also get pulled into behavioral testing for older, school-age children with varying degrees of genetic or developmental disorders. Other days are filled with meetings, whether it be to discuss patients, research, papers, or projects that I am involved with, and I try to take advantage of as many training workshops and seminars as I can to help further my professional development.

Do you feel that the ADP program prepared you well for your current job? What was the most helpful experience you had while in the program?
Of course! Since most of my current research group focuses on clinical populations, I am usually the go-to person to discuss typical development, or to raise sociocultural issues that may affect the results of testing. Aside from taking many different statistics courses, the most helpful experience I had during the ADP program was all of the language transcription and coding that I had done for my masters thesis and dissertation. All of that experience has sparked a new project that I initiated where we are going through 5+ years of videos of an autism diagnostic measure and transcribing the language and communication skills that children use during the assessment.

Where do you see yourself going after this job?
I am grateful to have accepted a tenure-track assistant professor position in the Department of Child and Adolescent Development at San Jose State University, which will start in Fall 2016.

If you could have done anything differently what would it be?
If you decide to go the tenure-track route, you should start working on your application materials long before you think! Writing research, teaching, and diversity statements, in addition to cover letters, takes time and many revisions to perfect, so start preparing early!
Dr. Allison Bock

Life after graduation

What are you doing now?
I am currently working as a postdoctoral fellow with the Early Math and Numeracy Lab at the University of Minnesota. I am working on several research projects that focus on studying math and executive function skills in preschool children.

What does your day-to-day look like?
Every day is a little different. I am currently working on several projects that are in very different phases of the research process. Some days I spend my time writing, whereas other days I am collecting data or creating stimuli for the projects. I have also been helping to collect data on rural child care providers, which has involved visiting sites throughout Minnesota. I am also working on a project with the Minnesota Department of Education that involves revising the Early Indicators of Progress for children five years of age and younger. This involves researching the development of math skills during early childhood and meeting with the revision committee to discuss the research.

Do you feel that the ADP program prepared you well for your current job? What was the most helpful experience you had while in the program?
Yes, the ADP program helped prepare me for this job. Managing research projects while working with Dr. Pasnak was an invaluable experience that helps me on a daily basis. Experience working with data and publishing was also crucial. The statistics courses that I took also were very important for the work that I do now.

If you could have done anything differently what would it be?
The only thing that I would have done differently is to follow up with projects completed in classes. These papers and projects are great opportunities to learn about publishing or presenting your work in multiple outlets. I wish that I would have pursued these further while a student.

What's a piece of advice for a current student in ADP?
I would suggest taking advantage of working on as many projects as you can while in the program and to try to have a variety of research experiences. Also, if you're interested in working outside of academia, I would recommend exploring the possibility of doing an internship while in the program.

Where do you see yourself going after this job?
I would like to continue to research children’s math and cognitive skills to inform ways that these skills can be improved in preschool children.
In the Development in School Contexts (DISC) lab, we are busily working on a variety of projects. For example, through a partnership with the American Psychological Association, Dr. Curby is going to be surveying 10,000 Kindergarten teachers to identify current kindergarten teachers’ judgments about children’s problems at kindergarten entry. We continue to analyze data examining the role of teachers in the development of children’s social-emotional competence. In fact, we submitted a research proposal last summer to develop an observational measure of social-emotional teaching.

Students in the DISC lab are working on a variety of their own projects. One student will be collecting data on classroom engagement among preschoolers to compare those with and without a disability. Another student is going to be doing a secondary data analysis of data examining peer relations in the preschool classroom. Yet another is examining how classroom emotional support consistency may benefit children who have depressed mothers.
This year Kate and Britney are the first to ever earn their M.A. degrees in 3 semesters, and Katrina has her Ph. D after only 4 1/2 years.

Katrina coauthored 3 journal articles based on past work, and has a 4th submitted. She also shared in 4 poster presentations. Ally has an article submitted and was the prime mover in a poster presentation. Amber also coauthored an article based on past work, plus three poster presentations. Mandana and Kate got a new project up and running in a preschool, and Kate has three poster presentations.

Amber Shriver has been centrally involved in the patterning project and has been joined by new students Laura Lauderdale and Kaity Burdette. We hope to find out why learning patterns of letters, numbers, and objects promotes reading and mathematics in primary school children. “Patterning” instruction is commonplace in American schools – it is part of the Common Core of American education. But so far, only our team has shown that it actually improves school achievement, and is actively involved in discovering why it works!
Dr. Denham’s Child Development Lab has had an on-going six-year grant from the NICHD for Assessing Social-Emotional Skills for School Readiness (ASESSR) and enhancing computer based versions of these assessments. With this grant, and the joint efforts of Dr. Curby’s DISC lab, Dr. Denham and her students have continued two core research projects, teachers as socializers of social emotional learning (TASSEL) and computerized assessment of preschool social-emotional learning (CAPSEL).

TASSEL examines the preschool teacher’s role in helping their students develop social and emotional competence as they prepare to move into kindergarten. For this project, both teachers and students are assessed on social and emotional measures. This project was completed in conjunction with Dr. Curby’s lab.

CAPSEL is a study that adapted, via computerization, research-based Social-Emotional Learning assessment tools with strong empirical predictive validity for school adjustment and achievement. These computerized tools will be used in early childhood educational settings, instructional and outcome-based purposes.
WinsLab has been very busy this year! We are working on our project funded by the National Endowment for the Arts using Miami School Readiness Project (MSRP) data to examine who takes elective arts-related courses (i.e., dance, art, music, drama) in middle school and do they appear to benefit from such experiences with the arts. Folks are working hard transcribing and coding videos, and entering/analyzing data for Jordan Thibodeaux's dissertation on self reported and observed private speech among youth tennis athletes. Plus everyone is working on their undergraduate honor’s theses, MA theses, and dissertations (and, of course, publishing the associated papers). Topics of these projects using MSRP data include immigrant advantage, predictors and outcomes of school mobility and high stakes testing, ethnic composition/diversity of elementary schools and child achievement, school quality as a moderator of the preschool fade-out effect, consequences of school suspensions, and predictors of gifted placement in school.


Recent ADP Publications/Presentations


Schmerold, K., Patterson, A., Mohtasham, M., Vennergrund, K., & Pasnak, R. (2015 October). Patterning in First Grade Relates to Executive Function and Mathematics Skills. Poster presented at Society for the Study of Human Development, Austin, TX.


Upcoming Conferences

SRCD Special Topics
October 6-8, 2016
Tampa, Florida

Grand Hyatt Hotel in Washington, DC

43rd Annual National Head Start Conference and Expo
May 16-20, 2016
Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center
Nashville, TN

APA Annual Convention
Denver, Colorado | August 4-7, 2016

AERA Annual Meeting
April 8-12, 2016
Washington, DC