

Goal Statement

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Portfolio I

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August 2022

Goal Statement

Academic Goals

I love learning. I always have, regardless of field. This specific love of mine was what led me to enter the field of Educational Psychology; I saw (and still do see) it as the way I can best support those around me in sharing that love of learning purely for its own sake. Upon entering this doctoral program, I started merely as wishing to use my intrinsic interest in learning and cognition as a means of supporting my community. What those specific terms meant at that time, I was not sure. Though ambiguous, my intrinsic motivation was strong and has allowed me to pursue my academics, and subsequently honed what those terms and goals mean concretely.

Now, rather than a nebulous yearning, I find my academic role to be evolving into one that focuses on taking theoretical knowledge from educational psychology into practical educational settings. More specifically, I aim to find a means to translate work on self-efficacy for self-regulated learning into practical knowledge for individuals in school mental health communities of practice to implement, supporting student success. More specifically, I want to give students the tools they need to be influential stakeholders in these spaces, with a focus on their self-efficacy, particularly in groups of students who have histories that include adverse childhood experiences.

Within the context of this PhD program, my primary specialization of Educational Psychology will support these goals by fostering my foundational knowledge of psychology within academic settings (i.e., self-regulation skills, self-efficacy), and establish my skills in identifying and exploring gaps in this knowledge for the betterment of educational contexts and those within them (i.e., research methods). My secondary specialization, classified as independent study, will provide me with the tools to tailor those credits in a way that allows me

to take courses that focus on school mental health, educators as first responders, and similar gaps in my knowledge.

Professional Goals

This program has, even within this first year, supported my vision of professional goals. I applied to the program merely wanting to see research I did applied in schools, and engage in teaching courses to provide support to the next generation of scholars in educational psychology; I wanted to create and foster a positive feedback loop of education. Each course and each interaction I have had within this program, though, has allowed me opportunities to engage with other researchers, school settings, professional organizations, and nonprofits to practice reaching out to learn from them and begin developing professional relationships I can cultivate throughout my career.

Research

Thus far within this program, as well as my Master's that directly preceded it, I have had the opportunity to engage in research as a graduate research assistant. Initially, work I engaged in revolved around traumatic experiences, and has moved into ideas of self-regulation, achievement goal orientations, student agency, and collaboration. Such work has seamlessly supported the ideas I engage with in my courses; these classes have provided me with methodological and academic tools to explore the gaps in my area of interest, and ultimately support my professional goals.

My initial goals statement from my application to this program was rather vague with respect to how I wanted to approach research. Beyond being called to explore self-efficacy for self-regulated learning and achievement goal orientations, little concrete description was provided. The first 18 credits of this doctoral program have elaborated how I view my role in

research. The specific problem I want to address is the academic struggle and lack of self-efficacy students with a history of adverse childhood experiences go through in classroom contexts (Blodgett & Lanigan, 2018; Gutierrez, 2022; Hertel & Johnson, 2013). Such students could benefit from a cohesive school mental health community of practice to support their holistic self-efficacy beliefs and self-regulation skills to give them the tools to flourish in school and their lives beyond the classroom (Keyes & Haidt, 2010; Weist et al., 2006); this is particularly important during the middle school age of transition (Caprara et al., 2008). In addition, students should be provided with a voice and agency to be effective stakeholders in such a community of practice to promote their agency and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Theories that could support this research include the self-efficacy and self-regulated learning components of social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 2019; Benight & Bandura, 2004; Caprara et al. 2008). Ecological systems theory could also inform messaging students receive, as well as their role as stakeholders (Bronfenbrenner, 1992; Reinke et al., 2011; Weist et al., 2006). Resiliency theory and social-emotional learning could also play a part in framing my specific interests within school mental health (Barrasso-Catanzaro, Eslinger, 2016; Gibson et al., 2016; Koni et al., 2019; Qouta et al., 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Salvatelli, 2019; Yeager & Dweck, 2012).

Teaching

Though these cover opportunities that include scholarship and research, I do still need to address the teaching component of academia. Thankfully, I do have this opportunity through CEHD to support undergraduate and master's level courses, better enabling me to enter academia at a research institution in the future. I was allowed a glimpse of what this might be like in the

summer of 2020 when I worked as a course assistant for a Master's level Counseling Assessment class. Supporting students during classes as a supplement to the professor, managing student questions, and grading student work was challenging but rewarding to experience when your students have that moment where the information just clicks. Prior to this, working as a tutor for secondary school students and creating my own supplementary materials, teaching neurodivergent learners, and teaching martial arts means teaching has been core to my identity since my own adolescent years. Though I need practice and experience, this is one of my professional goals I am most looking forward to.

Service

By setting myself up to work at a research institution in my career, I hope to harness these experiences to not only disseminate what I find to other researchers through journals and conferences, but also see them implemented in schools. Learners are in a tight spot with respect to mental health currently, and it is dragging down their school success. By helping this avenue grow with research, with supporting school programs, and by supporting future educators and educational psychologists, I can make a professional mark on the field of which I can be proud. Formally, I have joined the APA (Division 15), AERA (Divisions C and G; SIGs 003, 117, 121, and 170), and APS. More locally, I am a member of GMU's PhD Student in Education association, and engage in our Graduate and Professional Student Association events. Informally, I am taking opportunities to mentor individuals when possible by guiding undergraduate and Master's students who have reached out to me looking for questions, advice, and a supportive helping hand when trying to navigate academia. Though these are only first steps, it establishes a solid foundation for me to expand my opportunities for service going forward in my career.

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