Kristy Castanon is a kindergarten teacher working in a county public elementary school in Virginia. She loves what she is doing but wanted a new challenge, so she started looking into a PhD program in early childhood education. She came across the ETSU program which is about an hour and a half drive from where she lives, so she applied to the ETSU PhD program and was admitted in fall 2017. Her research interest focuses on trauma in early childhood, especially in trauma-sensitive classrooms. This interest led her to investigate different social-emotional aspects of children and the teachers, and how teachers’ behavior can affect and influence young children’s social-emotional growth. Kristy recently attended a national conference for trauma-sensitive schools, which focuses on bringing a trauma-sensitive culture into the public-school setting. She is currently researching teacher behavior and the language they use to communicate during stressful situations in order to be a positive role model for children. In addition to this, she co-taught an undergraduate course in GUIDING Young Children, in the fall 2020 semester with Dr. Evanshen as a mentor. Kristy will complete her comprehensive examination in spring 2021.

Kristy’s advice for the incoming PhD students is that they should not be afraid to ask questions because there are so many people in the department and the program who can help and point them in the right direction. Also, it is important to know that ETSU has many resources to support students.

Applications for the PhD in Early Childhood Education Program are evaluated once each year for admission in the fall semester. Application information is available online. Admission to the program has the same requirements as existing graduate school requirements plus additional specific requirements:

- Application form
- Application fee ($35 USA or $45 International)
- One official transcript from each institution attended (undergraduate and graduate)
- Personal résumé
- Personal essay including a written statement of career and ethical goals, professional experiences, and area of interest for a dissertation
- Official Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores taken within the past five years. Preferred scores are 50th percentile or higher
- Four letters of recommendation
- Master’s Degree in Early Childhood or a related field from a regionally accredited university
- An interview with the admissions committee

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
Spotlight on Students

Safa Alkaabi

Safa Alkaabi is from Saudi Arabia. She obtained her master's degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of Dayton. She started looking for a PhD in Early Childhood Education and came across the ETSU PhD program while browsing the web. She was pleased with what she found, applied and was admitted into the PhD program in Fall 2018.

Safa's research interest centers on academic resilience. Her dissertation will also focus on resilience. She expects to graduate in 2023.

Safa is currently preparing to complete her comprehensive examination in the Spring of 2021. Her advice for incoming PhD students is that they will face some challenges and have some difficulties, which they can overcome.

Kristin Lazarova

Kristin Lazarova lives and works in Johnson City. Her background is in Psychology. She earned both her undergraduate and master's degrees in Psychology from ETSU and teaches Psychology at Northeast State Community College. Her love for learning, interest in lifespan psychology, and lifespan development led her to apply to the ETSU PhD program. According to Kristin, the ETSU Early Childhood Education PhD program has a good reputation, offers many accredited programs, and Johnson City is already home to her family.

Kristin is interested in mindfulness and children's self-regulation. The effects of teachers’ mindfulness on children's self-regulation and behavior is the focus of her dissertation. She will complete her comprehensive exam during the Spring 2021 semester.

She is currently working on making the classes she teaches at Northeast State Community College more accessible to all her students. She is also involved in an Institutional Excellence Fellowship that focuses on faculty improvement within their courses. There is a need for more inclusion to accommodate all students regardless of disabilities, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, and cultural background.

Kristin's advice for the incoming students is that they should take advantage of all opportunities presented within the department. Be open to new learning opportunities, develop relationships with faculty members, and seek opportunities to conduct research with the faculty.

Nathan Martin, Kathryn Bomsel, Kate Robshaw, Dr. Broderick, & Virginia Holley co-authored an article, which will be published in the Jan/Feb issue of Science and Children based on a project from ECED 3150 Creative Development of Young Children.

Faculty Scholarly Highlights

Above: Alissa Lange, ECED faculty, Laura Robertson CUAI faculty, and Alyssa Hare, an ECED undergraduate student in the PK-3rd grade licensure program, presented virtually to the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators on Nov 4, 2020. The roundtable was entitled, “Impacts of, and reflections on a collaborative approach to pre-service STEM education.” The focus was on research impacts of participation in the early childhood-elementary STEM collaboration approach to pre-service teacher education in STEM, which is led by Robertson, Lange, and colleagues. The talk highlighted Alyssa Hare's unit plan and learning experiences that she designed as part of our ECED course last spring, and her reflections on the project.

Below: Nathan Martin and Kristin Lazarova.

Faculty attended several virtual conferences in Fall 2020. To the left is a screen shot of Dr. Broderick attending a session during the Association for Constructivist Teaching Annual Conference.
Congratulations to Dr. Narges Sareh who successfully defended her dissertation entitled, “The relationship between the amount of time spent in the block center and gender differences in preschool children’s spatial performance.” We are so proud of you!

Dr. Amy Malkus organized and moderated a workshop called Engaging Young Students in Virtual Classrooms with STEM for the Let’s Go Boys and Girls Organization in the DC/MD/VA area. Dr. Lange and Dr. Geiken participated as presenters, as did former students Angie Jordan and Kristen Galloway. About 25 educators were in attendance.

Faculty Presentations and Creative Activity

Dr. Atilles

Dr. Robertson


Dr. Broderick

Dr. Garcia

Dr. Valt

Dr. Broderick

Dr. Evansen

Dr. Sharp

Dr.幸福


Dr. Lange


Dr. Sharp