Elizabeth Bettini | Assistant Professor of Special Education

Selected Recent & Ongoing Research Projects

**Novice Special Educators’ Workload Manageability**
Novice teachers consistently report feeling overwhelmed, yet the causes and consequences of this are poorly understood. This project examined how novice special and general educators’ perceptions of workloads predicted their career intentions, burnout, and instruction, and how their social context supported them in managing their workloads. For this study, Dr. Bettini led secondary analyses of the Michigan and Indiana Early Career Teacher study.

**District Special Education Administrators’ Roles in Cultivating Special Educators**
District leaders increasingly play a role in cultivating effective teachers within their districts. In collaboration with scholars from the University of Florida, Dr. Bettini led this project to examine how special education administrators in a highly achieving, inclusive district conceptualized their roles in systemically cultivating effective special education teachers.

**Teachers’ Working Conditions in Special Education Classes for Students with ED**
Many students with ED are served in separate special education classes, yet instructional quality in these settings tends to be poor. This project aims to understand how working conditions in these settings may be influencing special educators’ instruction. Dr. Bettini is leading a series of investigations of how special educators experience and respond to their working conditions in these settings, in collaboration with scholars from the University of Florida.

Future Research Projects

**Working Conditions & Instructional Quality in Separate Classes for Students with ED**
Extending her research on working conditions in separate classes, Dr. Bettini plans to seek funding for a research project that would quantitatively identify relationships among special educators’ working conditions, instructional quality, and achievement growth among students with ED in self-contained special education classes. This research would test hypotheses generated through prior qualitative studies.

**Social Contexts and Novice Special Education Teacher Retention**
Extending prior research on how school social contexts support novice special educators’ efforts to manage their workloads, Dr. Bettini plans to seek funding for a secondary analysis of the Schools of Staffing Survey, investigating how novices’ social contexts contribute to their experiences and their retention decisions.

**Teacher Sorting, Principal Sorting, and Special Education Teacher Attrition**
Extending prior research investigating patterns of special educator sorting and attrition, Dr. Bettini plans to seek funding for a secondary analysis of Massachusetts data, investigating how disproportionate sorting of less experienced, less qualified, and less effective teachers and principals into high poverty schools serving students of color may contribute to patterns of special educator attrition, and how these patterns may contribute to achievement gaps among students with disabilities in schools serving students from different demographic backgrounds.

Biographical Sketch
Dr. Elizabeth Bettini’s research focuses on how working conditions (e.g. school social contexts, material resources, planning time) contribute to special educators’ instruction and retention. She focuses specifically on special educators who are new to teaching, serve students with emotional disabilities, or serve in high-poverty schools.