

Jana' L. Sparks, EdD.

Associate Professor

Department of Counseling, Leadership and Special Education
Auburn University at Montgomery
Montgomery, Alabama

Background

1. Education

Doctorate of Education, Educational Leadership, Higher Education
Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia, 2016

Education Specialist Degree, Educational Leadership
Troy University, Phenix City, Alabama, 2005

Masters of Education, Educational Leadership
Troy University, Phenix City, Alabama, 2003

Bachelors of Science, Elementary Education
Delaware State University, Dover, Delaware, 1999

Experience

A. Auburn University Montgomery

Associate Professor, Fall, 2017- Present

Instructor, Summer, 2017

Department of Counselor, Leadership, and Special Education

Course Taught (All Masters and Ed.S classes for Instructional Leadership)

- LEAD 6000 Leadership for Instructional Improvement (3 hours)
- LEAD 6100 Instructional Planning for Continuous Improvement (3 hours)
- LEAD 6200 Management of the Learning Organization (3 hours)
- LEAD 6300 Instructional Leadership and Human Resources (3 hours)
- LEAD 6400 Instructional Leadership and the Law, Ethics, and Diversity (3 hours)
- LEAD 6500 The Role of the Instructional Leader in Technology (3 hours)
- LEAD 6924 Instructional Leadership Internship (3 hours)
- LEAD 7000 Instructional Improvement through Leadership (3 hours)
- LEAD 7100 Instructional Leadership and Special Programs (3 hours)
- LEAD 7200 Culture, Change and Learning (3 hours)
- LEAD 7300 Mentoring and Adult Learning (3 hours)
- LEAD 7400 The Teaching and Learning Process (3 hours)
- LEAD 7500 Studies in Instructional Leadership (3 hours)
- LEAD 7982 Leadership Seminar (3 hours)
- LEAD 7984 Problem Analysis Project I (3 hours)
- FNDS 6610 Research in Education (3 hours)
- LEAD 6902 Studies in Instructional Leadership (3 hours)

B. Other Professional:

Principal

Lakewood Primary School, August, 2010- May, 2017

Phenix City, Alabama

- First Principal of Lakewood Primary School
- Designed the school layout
- Enrollment increased during tenure
- Expanded school curriculum to include fine arts/music and STEM curriculum
- Certified AMSTI Trainer
- Facilitated multiple professional development opportunities at the local school and county level
- School district Federal Audit Committee Member

District Mentoring Liaison

Phenix City Public Schools, August, 2007- May, 2017

Phenix City, Alabama

- Facilitated multiple professional development opportunities at the local school and county level
- Develops and presents workshops to all new faculty
- Assisted with assigning new faculty members with a mentor faculty member at 11 schools

Assistant Principal

Ridgecrest Elementary School, August, 2005-May 2010

Phenix City, Alabama

- Building test coordinator for a school of 825 students and 67 faculty members.
- Assisted the principal in establishing and maintaining an effective learning climate in the school
- Alabama State Department Reading and Math Assessment Task Force
- SACS Chairperson for 2008-2009
- Science Curriculum Environmental Co-Chair

Assistant Principal

South Girard Junior High School, August, 2004-May, 2005

Phenix City, Alabama

- Implemented the Middle School Concept for the first time in school history.
- Provided effective leadership for the school's curriculum and instructional program.
- Assisted with the overall academic and financial performance of instructional programs on the school level.

Elementary District Gifted Teacher (2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade)

Phenix City Public Schools, August, 2003-May, 2004

Phenix City, Alabama

- Worked with approximately 80 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade intervention students
Facilitated multiple professional development opportunities at the local school and county level
- Continuous Improvement Plan Leadership Committee
- District Language Arts Chairperson

7th Grade History Teacher

South Girard Junior High School, August, 2002- May, 2003

Phenix City, Alabama

- Textbook Selection Committee
- Building Leadership Team
- Co-authored curriculum for seventh grade teachers statewide for new Course of Study Standards for the State of Alabama

Pre-Kindergarten Teacher

Children's Friend Learning Center, August, 2001- May, 2002

Columbus, Georgia

- Pre-Kindergarten Lead teacher
- Employee/Teacher of the Year

3rd & 4th Grade Elementary Teacher

Smyrna Elementary School, December, 1999-May, 2001

Smyrna, Delaware

- Smyrna Elementary New Teacher of the Year
- Continuous Improvement Plan Leadership Committee

Scholarly and Creative Productivity:

1. Publications

A. Refereed/Invited Publications

a. Book chapters:

Sparks, J.L. (2018). Mentoring. In Austin, S. (Ed.), *How to Be A "Super Leader" Nuggets of Wisdom To Inspire Your Journey* (pp. 15). Author House Publishing.

b. Journal articles:

NATIONAL REFEREED

Klash, E., Henry, D., **Sparks, J.**, & Darch, E. (2025). Being a college professor...is it still worth it?: Coping with burnout and keeping our humanity as university teachers after the pandemic. *GATEways to Teacher Education*, 34(1), 9-22.

INTERNATIONAL REFEREED

Sparks, J.L. (2021). Defining Effective School Leadership. *Journal of Language and Education Policy*, 2(5), 1-5.

INTERNATIONAL REFEREED

Sparks, J.L. (2021). A Review of Teacher Mentoring Programs and the Impact on Teacher Retention. *International Journal of Social Policy and Education*, 3(7), 1-5.

STATE REFEREED

Sparks, J.L. (2021). Understanding Transformational Leadership during a time of uncertainty. *The Alabama Journal of Educational Leadership* 8, 10-15.

INTERNATIONAL REFEREED

Sparks, J., Simmons, K. & Bicard, S. (2020). Did you hear me? The effects of live simulated environments on active listening skills of instructional leaders. *International Journal of Social Policy and Education*, 2(7), 18-23.

STATE REFEREED

Sparks, J.L. (2020). An Investigation of New Teacher Mentorship. *The Alabama Journal of Educational Leadership*, 7, 42-50.

NATIONAL REFEREED

Sparks, J., Tsemenhu, R., Green, R., Truby, W., Brockmeier, L., & Noble, K. (2017). Investigating New Teacher Mentoring Practices. *National Teacher Education Journal*, 10(1), 59-65.

Other Publications

DISSERTATION

Sparks, J. (2016). *Qualitative Study to Identify Common Practices Used by Mentors Participating in New Teacher Mentoring Programs that Encourage Identified Teachers to Remain in the Teaching Profession* (Doctoral Dissertation, Valdosta State University).

Accreditation Report-

Sparks, J. (2025) SACSCOC reporting completion process due September 16, 2025

Sparks, J. (2021). Continuous Improvement Educator Preparation report for Instructional Leadership Class A. (CIEP)

Manuscripts Under Review-

Smith, K., **Sparks, J.**, Junkin, S., N. Bourke. (2021). Building a Community of Learners through Teacher, Social, and Cognitive Presence in an Online Classroom [Unpublished manuscript]. College of Education, Auburn University Montgomery.

Presentations

Sparks, J. L. (2025). *Collaborative Leadership: Improving Education Through Shared Decision-Making*. Alabama Association of Professors of Educational Leadership 2025 Virtual Spring Conference. (2025, February 28).

Sparks, J.L (2025). *New Year, New Goals*. Faculty Professional Development at Trenholm State Community College. (2025, January 9).

Thomas, T. & **Sparks, J.L** (2024) *K-12 Research in Action: How Leaders Harness the Power of Action Research to Improve Student Achievement by Promoting Teacher Efficacy*. SRCEA. Tuscaloosa, AL., United States. (2024, October 21).

Sparks, J.L (2024). President's Cabinet Professional Development at Trenholm State Community College Faculty Professional Development (2024, July 31).

Sparks, J.L & Thomas, T. (2024). *Leading with Emotional Intelligence*. Certified Public Management Program. AUM Continuing Education and Community Engagement (City of Montgomery Civic Staff). Montgomery, AL, United States. (2024, July 22).

Sparks, J.L & Thomas, T. (2024). *Leading with Emotional Intelligence*. Certified Public Management Program. AUM Continuing Education and Community Engagement (Auburn University at Montgomery Staff). Montgomery, AL, United States. (2024, June 24).

Sparks, J.L & Thomas, T.C. (2024). *Exploring Mentoring for Early Career Tenure-Track Black Women in Higher Education* [Round Table]. Auburn University College of Liberal Arts Inclusive Excellence Conference. Auburn, Alabama. (2024, April)

Sparks, J.L. (2022). *Team Building and Valuing Diversity*. Human Resources Child Care Services Division, Auburn University, Auburn, AL. Continuing Education & Community Engagement. April 12, 2022.

Sparks, J.L. (2022). *Strengthening Workplace Teams by Valuing Differences*. Montgomery, AL. Continuing Education & Community Engagement. April 10, 2022.

Sparks, J.L. & Austin, S. (2021). Leading Your Team with Emotional Intelligence. Montgomery, AL. Montgomery Public Schools Leadership (Principal) Academy. July 19, 2021.

Sparks, J.L. & Austin, S. (2021). *Effective Leadership: How Leadership is important to my role as a faculty member?* Montgomery, AL. Trenholm State Community College. March 12, 2021.

Sparks, J.L. (2021). *How to stand out and start your teaching career?* Professional Development and edTPA Writing Workshop. March 3, 2021.

Sparks, J.L. (2021). *Thinking in the Margain*. Round-table Presentation, Alabama Association of Professors of Educational Leadership Annual Conference. February 19, 2021

Sparks, J.L. & Austin, S. (2020). *Leading with Trust*. Montgomery, AL. Trenholm State Community College. November 20, 2020.

Sparks, J.L. (2020) *Leadership starts with you*. Lamplighters Youth Seminar, Columbus, Georgia. February 8, 2020.

Sparks, J.L. (2019) *Making great decision*. Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. Georgia State Meeting Youth Summit. Columbus, Georgia. September 28, 2019.

Sparks, J. L (2019). Technology Flash Talks. *Let's Share on SharePoint Online!* Auburn University Montgomery. Taylor Center. February, 27, 2019.

Sparks, J.L (2019). *How to use Soft Skills in Leadership?* Primerica Financial Services. Columbus Historical Trade Center. Columbus, Georgia, January 19, 2019.

Sparks, J.L. & Austin, S. (2018). Russell County School District Professional Development. *Why is Connecting parents to the school so important?* Phenix City, Alabama. January 3, 2019

Simmons, K.D. & **Sparks, J.L.** (2018) Teacher Education Divison (TED) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) International Conference SSEPC Symposium 2018. *Integrating Active Listening Skills During Parent-Teacher Conferences in Simulated Environments*. November 8, 2018.

Sparks, J.L. (2018). *Through Leadership how can I make a difference?* Muscogee County School District, Wesley Heights Elementary School. Columbus, Georgia. July 27, 2018.

Simmons, K.D. & **Sparks, J.L.** (2018). 6th Annual TeachLivE: *The Importance of Active Listening, Rephrasing, and Repeating during Parent-Teacher Conferences in a Simulated Environment*. Orlando, FL. University of Central Florida. May 23, 2018.

Sparks, J.L. (2018). *The Role of Culture & Climate*. Montgomery, AL. Trenholm State Community College. May 10, 2018.

Sparks, J.L. (2018). AUMazing Educators: Interview Preparation Night. *How can I prepare for the interviews?* Auburn University at Montgomery. April 16, 2018.

Simmons, K.D. & **Sparks, J.L.** (2018) *Introducing the Virtual Avatar World*. Montgomery, AL, Pike Road School District Presentation. February 26, 2018.

Sparks, J.L. (2018). Phenix City Public Schools, Teacher In-service. *It's Time to make a difference with your Leadership ability*. Westview Elementary School, Phenix City, Alabama. February 15, 2018.

Sparks, J.L. (2018) *It's time to get ready for your career in education*. AUM College of Education Internship Initial and Exit Seminar Invitation. April 13, 2018

Simmons, K.D. & **Sparks, J.L.** (2018). Air Force College. *Leadership Styles in the Military*. Air Command & Staff College: Squadron College; and Academy. Auburn University Montgomery, May 21, 2017.

Simmons, K.D. & **Sparks, J.L.** (2017). Virtual Avatar Laboratory (VAL) Open House. *Showcasing the VAL and Providing Live Demonstrations*. College of Education. Auburn University Montgomery.

Sparks, J.L. (2017). AUMazing Educators Night: Field Experience. *Your next step in Education*. Auburn University Montgomery. October 19, 2017.

Simmons, K.D. & **Sparks, J.L.** (2017). Air Force College. *Leadership Styles in the Military*. Air Command & Staff College: Squadron College; and Academy. Auburn University Montgomery. September 21, 2017.

Sparks, J.L. (2016) Hong Kong International Conference on Education, Psychology and Society, in Hong Kong. *Qualitative Study to Identify Common Practices Used by Mentors Participating in New Teacher Mentoring Programs that Encourage Identified Teachers to Remain in the Teaching Profession* December 5, 2016.

Other Scholarly or Creative Activities

Service in the role of officer of professional organization, program committee member, session organizer for professional meeting

- Alabama Association of Professors of Educational Leadership, Member at Large, 2018-Present
- Freedom Train For Kids, Advisory Board, 2020-Present
- Alabama Association of Professors of Educational Leadership, Session Organizer for Spring 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 Conference

Professional society membership

- Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (SRCEA), 2018-Present
- Alabama Association of Professors of Educational Leadership, Member 2017-Present
- National Education Association (NEA), 2017-Present
- Student Alabama Education Association (SAEA), 2017-Present
- Alabama Education Association (AEA), 2017-Present
- Alabama Council for Exceptional Children, 2018-2019
- Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), 2018-2019
- The National Council for Exceptional Children-Small Special Education Programs Caucus (SSEPC) 2018-2019
- Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools (CLAS), 2004-2019
- Alpha Delta Kappa International Honorary Organization for Women Educators 2004-2019

Awards, Lectureships, or Prizes

- 2025 Excellence In Teaching Award, College of Education, Auburn University at Montgomery
- 2022, Deans Service Award, College of Education, Auburn University at Montgomery
- Fall 2020 Commencement Speaker, Valdosta State University
- 2020 Graduate of the Last Decade Recipient, Valdosta State University

Major Areas of Creative or Research Interest

- New teacher mentoring programs
- Quality staff development
- Innovative leadership practices

Other Professional Accomplishments

A. Course/Program design and development

- LEAD 6924- Constantly under development, assignments build on each other, purposefully planned meeting dates for specific activities, and planning for use of the VAL in this course.
- LEAD 6902 Studies in Instructional Leadership- Redesigning this course for instructional leadership candidates; creating a course with emphasis on special issues in education, and professionalism
- LEAD 6903 Seminar: Diversity and Equity in Education-New course for instructional leadership candidates; participants will begin to see the importance of developing a new systemic vision for educational leadership in the face of the increasing diversity, change, and complexity in our local, national and global context.

Special recognition for teaching

- 2015 Administrator of the Year Award– Phenix City Public School
- 2004 Smyrna Elementary New Teacher of the Year, May,

Academic Service

a. On-Campus

i. College of Education/ Department

- Search Committee for Counselor position (2025)
- Academic Affairs Chair for COE (2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-Current)
- COE Graduate Council (2019-2020, 2020-2021, 2021-2022, 2022-2023, 2023-2024, 2024-Current)
- Honors Day/Scholarship committee (chair) 2018-Current)
- COE Goals Committee (member) (2019-Current)
- CAEP Standard 3 Committee Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Selectivity (2017-Current)
- COE Curriculum Committee, (2019-Current)
- COE Comprehensive Exam Exit Committee (2018-Current)
- Instructional Leadership Recruitment Plan Committee (2018-Current)
- Search Committee Instructional Leadership position (2023)
- Search Committee for Counseling position (2022)
- Search Committee College of Education Dean (2022)
- Search Committee- Certification Officer and Field Experience Manager (member) 2021
- Search Committee-Instructional Leadership Assistant/Associate Professor (chair) 2021
- Search Committee –Clinical Mental Health Assistant/Associate Professor (chair) 2020
- Search Committee -Director of the Early Learning Center (chair) 2019
- Search Committee Accreditation and Assessment Manager (2019)
- Search Committee-Early Learning Center Staff Curriculum Instructor (member) 2019
- National Science Foundation Brainstorming Grant Committee 2019
- Search Committee- School Counselor Education Assistant Professor search (member) 2018
- Search Committee- Elementary Education Professor (member) 2018
- COE Advisory Board Meetings 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023
- Field Experience/Internship Preparation 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023
- Professional Development and edTPA Writing Workshop 2021
- Secondary Comprehensive Exam 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023
- Graduate Preview Night 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025
- Contributed to other miscellaneous functions within the College (2017 – Present)

ii. University

- AUM Professional Improvement Leave, (2021-2024)
- AUM Mediation Services Team, 2020-2023
- Search Committee College of Education Dean (2023)
- Search Committee for Southern Literature Assistant Professor (2023)

- Search Committee Instructional Design position (2022)
- Search Committee for University Technology Coordinator (2022)
- AUM Lecture Committee, 2020-2021
- AUM Facilities Strategic Planning Committee (Master Plan- Facilities) 2018-2020

- AUM Council of the Accreditation of Educator Preparation Standard 2 2018-2019
- AUM Library committee 2017-2019

b. Off campus

- National Council of Negro Women, Charter member, Columbus, Georgia chapter 2016-Current
- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Lamplighter Mentoring Advisor, Columbus, GA 2018-2020
- Anna A. Mims Heritage Bowl Committee 2015-2020
- Board of Directors for the Cora Reid Greene Home 2016-2017
- Habitat for Humanity Volunteer, Columbus, Georgia 2017-2019

B. Other service

Spelling Bee moderator at Downtown Elementary School, 2019

2. Other items of importance not to be found above

- A. Current ALSDE Teaching Certificate Endorsements JLS-0036-5243
 Class AA, Educational Administrator Certification-ALSDE (082) (valid 2024-2029)
 Class A, Educational Administrator Certification-ALSDE (081) (valid 2024-2029)
 Class B, Elementary Education Certification-ALSDE (75A) (valid 2024-2029)
 Class B, Middle School Education Certification-ALSDE (078) (valid 2024-2029)
- B. Accreditation Reports for national/state accreditation/approval:
- CIEP report for the Instructional Leadership department, 2020
 - CAEP report for Standard 3, 2020
- C. Alabama Superintendents Certification, University of Alabama (2021 & 2022)
- D. CITI Training Certification renewed 2021
- E. AUM Campus Mediator Training completed Spring 2020
- F. FDI 1000 Cohort 1-Training Certification, May 2021
- G. Evaluator
 AdvancED Systems District External Review Team, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Outside Evaluator. Tifton, GA. April 11-13, 2016