

Tamela Ciara Thomas
Assistant Professor of Instructional Leadership
Auburn University at Montgomery
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EDUCATION

University of Arizona

Doctor of Philosophy, 2020

Major: Educational Policy Studies and Practice

Minor: Science Teaching and Learning

Dissertation Title: "Consonance or Dissonance: Black Girls and Instructional Leaders in the Context of Neoliberal Science Education"

Dissertation Directors: Dr. Kevin L. Henry and Dr. Stephanie Troutman

University of Arizona

Master of Educational Leadership, 2016

University of Alabama at Birmingham

Educational Specialist, 2009

Major: Teacher Leadership

Minor: Curriculum Development and Implementation

Thesis Title: "Special Education Teacher Perspectives on the Inclusive Science Classroom"

University of Alabama at Birmingham

Master of Education, Secondary Science Education, 2006

Xavier University of Louisiana

Bachelor of Science, 2004

Major: Microbiology

Minor: Chemistry

Cum Laude: English

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Certifications

Arizona State Administrative Certification, Principal PreK-12

Arizona Teaching Certificate, Biology and General Science 7-12, Structured English Immersion K-12

Employment

Auburn University at Montgomery, Montgomery, AL. 2024- present
Assistant Professor of Instructional Leadership

Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA 2020-2023
Assistant Professor of Teacher Leadership

Paulo Freire Freedom School, Tucson, AZ 2019-2020
Principal

- Served as teacher instructional coach and evaluator
- Managed school budget
- Created school-wide communication system to support parent and community collaboration
- Created policy and procedures for responsive and equitable school discipline
- Created school Human Resources protocols and management system
- Facilitated professional development in the areas of culturally relevant curriculum, culturally responsive instruction, project-based learning, competency-based learning
- Led remote learning transition for grades 6-12 during COVID-19 school closure

Tucson Magnet High School, Tucson, AZ 2016-2019

Assistant Principal, Professional Development, Assessment, and Teaching & Learning

- Evaluated and coached 43 teachers in the areas of planning, instruction, classroom environment, and professional practice
- Facilitated Instructional Council comprised of department chairs in the mission to continuously improve instruction and increase student learning
- Served as Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) Program Administrator
- Managed 21st Century Federal Grant
- Served as School Improvement Committee-Chair
- Facilitated National Magnet Certification application process
- Served as school-wide testing coordinator for state and national assessments for 3,300 students

Tucson Unified School District, Tucson, AZ 2012-2016

Master Teacher Mentor/ Curriculum Facilitator

- Created professional development in areas of classroom management, curriculum planning, instruction, and teacher leader development for teachers at various stages in their careers
- Facilitated teachers in the Plan-Teach-Reflect cycle through one-on-one collaboration, classroom observation, and reflective dialogue around professional practice
- Served as Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching Certified Evaluator and District Trainer for administrators and teachers
- Worked as Essential Elements of Instruction Trainer for novice classroom teachers

(years 1-3 in profession)

- Facilitated district wide curriculum development for groups of Science and English teachers
- Served as field researcher for Unitary Status Plan implementation and yearly plan evaluation of meeting strategic goals

Opelika City Schools, Opelika, AL

2010-2012

Biology, Physical Science, Genetics, Anatomy & Physiology Teacher

- Planned and delivered standards-based science curriculum
- Managed Opelika High School distance learning program
- Mentored and tutored Opelika High School students participating in school at-risk intervention program
- Facilitated professional development on culturally responsive science practices in the secondary science classroom

Leeds City Schools, Leeds, AL

2005-2010

7th Grade Life Science Teacher

- Served as Promethean Board District Technology Trainer
- Served as Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Accreditation Chair
- Employed as homebound student instructional coordinator
- Acted as National Honor Society Committee- Co-Chair
- Worked as Bridge Program Tutor/ Advisor- Preparing students for post secondary education and training
- Acted as system-wide teacher recruiter for Leeds City School District
- Served as Science Department Chair
- Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative Site Coordinator
- Budget Committee- Chair
- Leeds City Schools Alternative School Curriculum Coordinator
 - developed daily academic schedule for secondary alternative school
 - created individual academic and behavior plans for each student with input from general education teacher, exceptional education teacher, parents, counselor, administrator and alternative school monitor
- Making Middle Grades Work Team-Team Leader
- Administrative Advisory Committee
 - served on teacher and administrator interview committees
 - communicated areas of concerns from teachers and staff to administration
 - collaborated with administration and committee members to address problems and concerns at site
 - conducted bi-weekly department meetings with assigned departments to communicate pertinent information about site and district
- Building Based Student Support Team- Chair

- facilitated child study teams in creating intervention plans for students having academic and behavioral issue
- served as team representative in IEP meeting for students\referred to Exceptional Education

Skills and Special Training

- Arizona K-12 Center Master Teacher Mentor
- New Teacher Center of Santa Cruz Mentor Teacher Academy Training
- Cognitive Coaching® Training
- LEAD Now Pima County School Superintendent's Leadership Institute
- Magnet School of America Certified School Leader

Professional and Service Organizations

- School Social Worker Association
- American Education Research Association
- American Education Association- Local President 2008-2010
- National Science Teacher Association (NSTA)
- TEACH.org Teacher Ambassador
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated
- University of Alabama at Birmingham Urban Enhancement Program Advisory Board

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Interests: Critical instructional leadership practice, policy creation and implementation, culturally relevant and feminist-based pedagogies, STEM education, and the social contexts of education

Scholarship and Research (*Invited)

Croft, S. J. Elue, C., Juergensen, M., **Thomas, T.** (Submitted, April 2025). Mane Matters: Exploring Hair Discrimination Against Black Women School Leaders. *Multicultural Perspectives*

Juergensen, M., **Thomas, T.** Elue, C., Croft, S. J. (Revisions Submitted, February 2025). Leading the Black Woman Way: A Collaborative Autoethnography of Black Women Educational Leaders in P-20 Contexts to the *Journal of African American Women and Girls in Education*

Jimenez, A. M., Elue, C., Harrington, K. L., Wells, J. B., **Thomas, T.**, Croft, S., & Goodgame, C. (2023). Transforming a University Departmental Culture from Toxicity to Health: A Collaborative Autoethnographic Study. *Educational Planning*, 30(4), 31-47.

Juergensen, M., **Thomas, T.** (2022, submitted for initial review). The work we must do: Toward understanding how early-career Black women faculty are navigating their place in higher

education in T. Allen & K. Hairston (Eds.) *Views from the Ivory Tower: Experiences of BIPOC Women in Higher Education*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Little.

*Thomas, T. C. (2022). Identifying Opportunities and Making Space: Increasing Productivity During a Pandemic. In Ramon Goings, Sherella Cupid, Montia Gardner, Antione Tomlin (Ed.), *Dissertating During a Pandemic: Narratives of Success from Scholars of Color*.

Jackson, T. E., **Thomas, T. C.** (2021) In Institute for Educational Finance (Ed.), *Washington: Current education budget trends*. Urbana, IL: Journal of Education Finance

Jackson, T. E., **Thomas, T. C.** (2021) In Institute for Educational Finance (Ed.), *Colorado: Current education budget trends*. Urbana, IL: Journal of Education Finance

Grants

National Science Foundation-Science for ALL, \$5,000,000, (October 1, 2024), Role: Senior/ Key Personnel

Bagwell College of Education Research Grant, Kennesaw State University, \$2500 (awarded for AY 2021-2022), *Toward an Ecology of Black Women School Leadership*, Role: Co-PI

Field Research

Tucson Unified School District African American Task Force for Learning Tucson, AZ
Field Researcher 2013-2015

- Facilitated data talks with teachers, community members, administrators, parents, and district personnel around academic achievement for African American students in across school district
- Served as Courageous Conversations trainer for task force members
- Collaborated to develop instruments and methodology around data analysis
- Prepared presentations and shared data with stakeholders in schools, district meetings, and governing board sessions
- Prepared and published findings under the district Unitary Status Plan

Arizona K-12 Center Arizona Master Teacher Phoenix, AZ/ Tucson, AZ
Field Researcher 2012-2014

- Planned and conducted mixed-methods study of teacher efficacy and effectiveness
- Collected data from interviews, archived data, surveys, and observation
- Prepared written report and analysis for presentation of findings to be evaluated by review board for Arizona Master Teacher Certification.

- Utilized findings to create and facilitate a professional learning series for full-time release teacher mentors in Tucson Unified School District.

TEACHING, PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS, AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FACILITATION

Areas of Teaching Experience: 6-12 Science, Secondary Science Methods, Teacher Leadership, Teacher and Administrator Professional Development, Intersectionality, Feminist Pedagogies

University Course(s)

- LEAD 6902: Studies in Instructional Leadership (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- LEAD 7952: Instructional Leadership Seminar, (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- LEAD 6400: Law, Ethics & Diversity, (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- LEAD 7500: Ethical Instructional Leadership Decision Making, (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- LEAD 7984: Problem Analysis Project, (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- LEAD 6300: Instructional leadership & HR, (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- LEAD 7200: Instructional Leadership for Culture, Change and Learning, (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- LEAD 7902: Studies in Instructional Leadership II, (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- LEAD 7000: Instructional Improvement Thru Shared Leadership, (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- LEAD 7400: Teaching and Learning Process, (2023-Present), Graduate Faculty, Auburn University at Montgomery
- TLED 7980: Action Research in Schools (2020- Current), Graduate Faculty, Kennesaw State University
- TLED 7990: Capstone and Internship (2021-Current), Graduate Faculty, Kennesaw State University
- TLED 7465: Professional Learning in Schools (2022-Current), Graduate Faculty, Kennesaw State University
- EDL 370: Critical Perspectives in Leadership (2017), Graduate Assistant Instructor, University of Arizona

Directed Student Learning

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Tommie Darnell, The Academic Growth of Non-Disabled Peers in an Inclusion Classroom, GA. Status: Graduate, December 2023.

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Heather Philpot, Impactfulness and Relevance of Financial Algebra Curriculum at Allen High School, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, December 2023.

Dissertation Chair: Samantha Fields: The Effects of Fine Arts Exposure on Academic Achievement in High School Students, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2023.

Dissertation Chair: Micah Ducre, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in High School Science: Assessing the Implementation in Title 1 Classrooms, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2023.

Dissertation Chair: Tamara Brodrick, “We’re All Teachers Here!: The Role Peer Relationships Play in Teacher Leaders’ Influence in Schools. Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2023.

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Shakoia Aiken: Teachers’ Burnout Experience in a Title I Suburban Elementary School, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2022.

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Samuel Baillie, Effects of a Professional Learning Experience on Middle School Teachers’ Perceptions, Experiences, and Implementation of Curricular-Embedded Self-Regulated Learning and Motivation, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2022.

Chair (Until January 2024)

Dissertation Chair: Valeria Williams Teacher Leadership doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2024

Dissertation Chair: Ann Dunn Teacher Leadership doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2024

Dissertation Committee Member: Venus Ware: Teacher Leadership doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Expected, Spring 2025

Dissertation Committee Member: Amber Wilson: Teacher Leadership doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Expected, Spring 2025

Dissertation Committee Member: John Brittain, Student Engagement in Junior High World Languages Classes. Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2022

Dissertation Committee Member: Lanadia Pugh, Identifying Teacher Perceptions of Teaching At Promise Students Online in an Alternative School. Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2022

Dissertation Committee Member: Carlon Scholz, Teachers' Perceptions of an Inclusive STEM High School. Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2022

Dissertation Committee Member: Clarice Shuman, Exploring the Effects of Teachers' Motivation to Read on Students' Motivation to Read. Kennesaw, GA. Status: Graduate, May 2022

Dissertation Committee Member: Lekisha Ector: Teacher Leadership doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Expected, Spring 2024

Dissertation Committee Member: Alison Norman, Teacher Leadership doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Expected, Spring 2024

Dissertation Committee Member: Cheryl Benthem: Teacher Leadership doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Expected, Spring 2025

Dissertation Committee Member: Spenser Fortson: Teacher Leadership doctoral candidate at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA. Status: Expected, Spring 2025

Professional Presentations (*Invited)

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

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

Thomas, T.C., Juergensen, M., Elue, C., Croft, S. A Collaborative Autoethnography of Black women Educational Leaders in P-20 Contexts [Paper Presentation]. Auburn University College of Liberal Arts Inclusive Excellence Conference. Auburn, Alabama. (2024, April)

Sparks, J. & Thomas, T.C., 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)

Thomas, T.C., Juergensen, M., Elue, C., Croft, S. (American Education Research Association). In Pursuit of Our Truth: Reimagining the Higher Education Narrative with Black Women School Leaders, Chicago, Illinois. (April 16, 2023).

Croft, S., Juergensen, M., Thomas, T., Elue, C., Harry, D., University Council for Educational Administration Conference (University Council for Educational Administration),

- "Working for equity: Exploring Sustainable pathways for success for Black women in higher education," (University Council for Educational Administration Conference) Seattle, WA. (November 2022).
- Juergensen, M., Thomas, T. C., Sanders, M., (Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate), "We each have something the other needs:" From a fractured EdD program to a virtual community of practice for teacher-leaders." Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (October 14, 2022).
- Thomas, T.C. (2021, October 8). Who and What is Missing: A critical audit of a teacher leadership doctoral program. Georgia Educational Research Association. Atlanta, Georgia (virtual).
- *Thomas, T. C., *Georgia Teacher Leadership Virtual Professional Learning Community: A Focus on Equity*. Georgia Professional Standards Commission, Atlanta, GA.
- Thomas, T. C. (Presenter & Author), Re/Building Home: Coloniality, Belonging, Educational Leadership, "Concepts of Belonging Through Interdisciplinary Lenses," University Council for Educational Administration, Virtual. (November 19, 2020).
- *Thomas, T. C. (2020). *Positionality and Perspective*. University of Arizona, Guest Lecturer, English 478: African American Literature, Tucson, AZ.
- *Thomas, T.C. (2019, October). *Fall Film Screening: Paper Tigers*. City Center for Collaborative Learning Professional Development Center
- Thomas, T.C. (Accepted Paper). Does Knowing Better Mean Doing Better? Instructional Leaders Supporting Black Girls in the Context of Neoliberal Science Education. American Educational Research Association. San Francisco, California.
- *Canceled due to COVID-19
- Thomas, T.C. (2019, November 21) Harmony or Dissonance: Black Girls and Instructional Leadership in the Context of Neoliberal Science Education. *University Council for Educational Administration*. New Orleans, LA.
- Gonzalez, N., Marquez, A., **Thomas, T. C.** (2018) A Quantitative Measure to Advance Asset-based Pedagogies with Historically Marginalized Youth. *American Educational Research Association*. New York, New York.
- *Thomas, T.C. (2018). Trauma Informed Instruction. *City Center for Collaborative Learning*. Tucson, AZ.
- Thomas, T.C (2018). Culturally Responsive Tier I Instruction. *Ray Unified School District Teacher Inservice*. Kearny, AZ.
- *Thomas, T.C., Grivois, -Shah, T. (2017) *Vicarious Trauma: Self- Care Practices for Social Workers*, School Social Work Association of Arizona, Phoenix, AZ
- Thomas, T.C. (2013-2018). *Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching Qualified Evaluator Training*, Tucson Unified School District. Tucson, AZ.
- Thomas, T.C. (2012-2015). *2B or Not 2B: Classroom Management and the Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching*, Tucson Unified School District, Tucson, AZ.

Thomas, T.C. (2012-2015). *Essential Elements of Instruction*. Tucson Unified School District, Tucson, AZ.

SERVICE

College Level

Auburn University at Montgomery Scholarship and Honors Day Committee, Member. (March 2025-Present)

Auburn University at Montgomery EdD Organizational Committee, Member. (May 2025-Present)

Auburn University at Montgomery Camp Warhawk, Defining Your Leadership Identity as a Freshman. (July, 2024)

Auburn University at Montgomery Secondary Comprehensive Exam Committee, Member. (May 2024-Present)

Kennesaw State University. Committee Member, Global Engagement Committee, approximately 8 hours spent for the year, appointed, (October 20, 2020 - January 2023)

Kennesaw State University Coordinator, Teacher Leadership Program, appointed, (July 2021-January 2023)

Kennesaw State University Coordinator, Teacher Leadership Program, appointed. (July 2021-January 2024)

Kennesaw State University Committee Member, Bagwell College of Education Curriculum Committee, Member. (August 2022-January 2024)

Community Level/Invited

Thomas, T.C. and Juergensen, M. (June 2, 2023). Leveraging Leadership in the Classroom. Governor's School Leadership Academy Aspiring Principal Program, Kennesaw, GA.

Thomas, T.C. and Jurgensen, M. (January 8, 2023). Culturally Congruent Practice2, Cherokee County Schools, Canton, GA.

Thomas, T.C. and Jurgensen, M. (August 16, 2022). Culturally Congruent Practice 1, Cherokee County Schools, Canton, GA. E. Other service Chair, Georgia Professional Learning Standards Virtual Professional Learning Community, appointed, State. (September 2022 – January 2024)

Professional Level

National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME). LEARN Committee Member. (January 2025- Present).

Reviewer, Alabama Journal of Educational Leadership (AJEL) Peer-Reviewer. (June 3, 2024-Present)

Reviewer, Journal Article, Journal of Education Human Resources, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, approximately 6 hours spent for the year, appointed, Pro Bono, International. (December 19, 2020 - Present).

Reviewer, Journal Article, Georgia Educational Researcher, Georgia, United States, approximately 6 hours spent for the year, appointed, Pro Bono, State. (October 16, 2020 - Present).

Organization Membership

- Alabama Education Association (AEA)
- Alabama Association of Professors of Educational Leadership (APPEL)
- Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (SRCEA)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Civil Rights and Civic Virtue Faculty Fellows Community of Practice at Auburn University at Montgomery, 2024-2025 Fellow
- Erasmus Circle Scholar, 2019
- Pima County LEAD Now Emerging Assistant Principal, 2018-2019
- Arizona Master Teacher, 2012
- University of Alabama at Birmingham Urban Teacher Enhancement Program Scholar, 2006-2009
- University of Alabama at Birmingham Spotlight Teacher, 2009
- University of Alabama at Birmingham Outstanding Ed.S. Student, 2009-2010
- Leeds City Schools Teacher of the Year, 2008-2009