

## CROSS-INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATION SPOTLIGHT: NCLII SCHOLARS PARTICIPATE IN PROJECT FOCUS

**Project FOCUS** is an IES-funded Goal 1 project that ultimately aims to help schools “focus” on implementing a key set of malleable variables (those that can be changed by the school) associated with reading outcomes. NCLII faculty member **Stephanie Al Otaiba** (SMU) is the Principal Investigator while Aki Kamata and NCLII faculty members **Jill Allor** and **Paul Yovanoff** serve as Co-PIs. NCLII faculty member **Francesca Jones** is also participating in this research. Other NCLII faculty who have consulted with Project FOCUS include **Michael Coyne**, **Chris Lemons**, **Dan Maggin**, **Jessica Toste**, and **Jeannie Wanzek**.

The project’s immediate goal is to learn which factors about Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) implementation are associated with stronger reading outcomes for students in Tier 3 or for students receiving dyslexia services or special education services for reading disabilities. A strong rationale for Project FOCUS is growing concern in the field of special education that variable RTI implementation results in a diluted Tier 3 and less potent special education for students with the most intense needs.

Project FOCUS involves data collection across multiple sites in multiple states in partnership with NCLII, allowing for a variety of RTI models as well as geographic and socioeconomic locations to represent a range of school risk. The project is nearing the end of its second year of data collection. Collaboration with NCLII Scholars has been instrumental in ramping up Project FOCUS; these Scholars include **Kristi Baker**, **Carlin Conner**, **Veronica Mellado De La Cruz**, and **Jennifer Stewart (SMU)**; **Rachel Donegan** (Vanderbilt); **Katie Leonard** and **Tori Whaley** (UConn); and **Skip Kumm** and **Gina Braun** (UIC).

Scholars have been involved in the process of interviewing RTI campus leaders, recruiting schools, conducting informational sessions with school staff, completing observations of reading lessons on-site, preparing video trainings, collecting staff surveys and school-wide reading data, coding data, and disseminating findings, among other tasks. These sources will be used to more closely consider factors related to challenges faced by schools, including RTI implementation and teachers’ knowledge of RTI implementation.

The completion of Project FOCUS will result in a rich database that will allow for the design of feasible and promising interventions for students in order to improve professional development for teachers and to better understand school system supports that can help improve implementation of Tier 3 and special education. For more information, visit the website: [blog.smu.edu/projectfocus](http://blog.smu.edu/projectfocus)

### UPCOMING DATES

**NCLII Meta-Analysis Summer Workshop**

**June 11-13, 2018** (arrive on June 10)  
Vanderbilt University

**OSEP Project Directors Meeting**

**July 23-25, 2018**  
Washington, DC

**Fall NCLII All-Scholar Meeting**

**November 8-10, 2018**  
UT Austin

**DC Policy Meeting & All-Scholar Meeting**

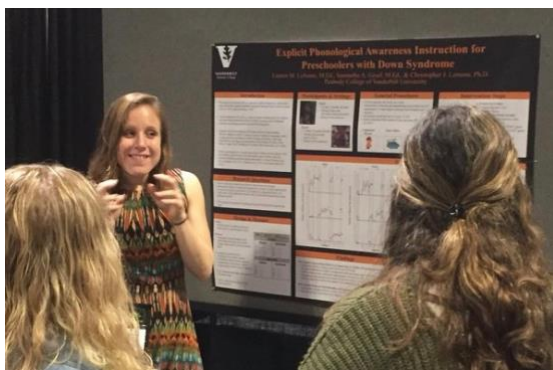
**January 15-17, 2019**  
Washington, DC

### DC POLICY & NCLII ALL-SCHOLAR MEETING: JANUARY 15-17, 2019

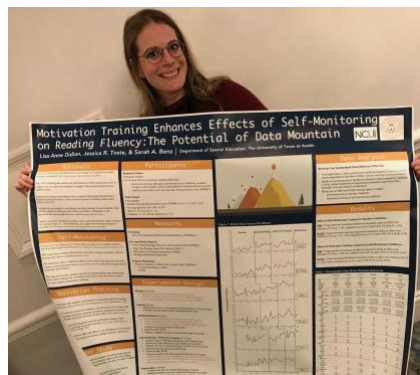
In January 2019, NCLII and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) will be hosting a policy-focused meeting in Washington, DC. The goal is to help scholars become more familiar with the network of policy-related organizations and groups, better understand the relationships that faculty have with various players in DC, and to discuss current issues at the forefront of policy-related conversation. Activities will potentially include site visits, presentations on relevant topics, and panels featuring federal agency funders (e.g., OSEP, IES), policy and research organizations (e.g., CEC, AIR), advocacy groups, and/or university professors engaged in policy-related work. The policy meeting will take place over 2 days (January 15-16); NCLII will then host a brief ½ day NCLII All-Scholar Meeting on January 17. More details to follow soon!

## SCHOLAR PRESENTATIONS IN EARLY 2018

It's been a busy start to the year for our Scholars, as they have actively participated in a number of conferences across the country. In February in particular, scholars participated in a total of **23 presentations** at the CEC 2018 Expo and Convention in Tampa, FL. Other conferences featuring Scholar presentations included the Pacific Coast Research Conference (San Diego), the Midwest Symposium for Leadership in Behavioral Disorders (Kansas City), and the 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Positive Behavior Support (San Diego). Please check out [www.nclii.org/events/](http://www.nclii.org/events/) for more upcoming events!



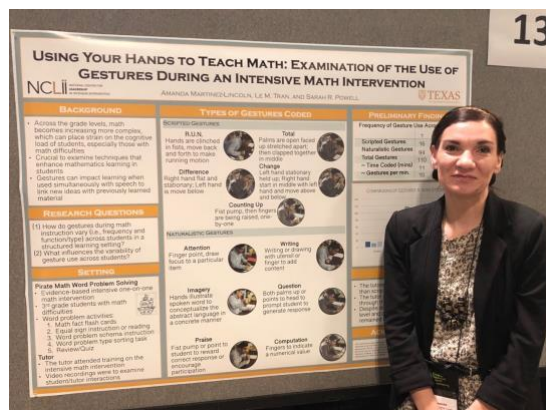
Cohort 1 Scholar Samantha Gesel leads a poster presentation on “Explicit Phonological Awareness Instruction for Preschoolers with Down Syndrome” at CEC 2018.



Cohort 1 Scholar Lisa Didion with her poster “Motivation Training Enhances Effects of Self-Monitoring on Reading Fluency: The Potential of Data Mountain” at the Pacific Coast Research Conference.



Scholars Sarah Wilkinson, Caitlyn Majeika, and Skip Kumm at the International Conference on Positive Behavior Support, where they presented on “Intensifying Behavioral Interventions Through a Data-Based Decision-Making Process” (missing: Brittany Sterrett)



Cohort 1 Scholar Amanda Martinez-Lincoln’s poster presentation “Using Your Hands to Teach Math: Examination of the Use of Gestures During an Intensive Math Intervention” at CEC 2018

**COHORT 2 INTENSIVE INTERVENTION PRACTICE GUIDES** are now online! Visit [www.nclii.org/intensive-intervention-practice-guides/](http://www.nclii.org/intensive-intervention-practice-guides/) to read what our fabulous scholars have created regarding visual activity schedules, opportunities to respond, and RTI for secondary students who struggle with reading comprehension.