

# Karissa J. Sywulka Mitchell

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## – Education & Certifications –

### **Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, Missouri**

Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction	Anticipated Completion Date: May 2026
Shared Mission Program Certificate	Anticipated Completion Date: October 2025
Reinert Center Principles in University Teaching Skills Certificate	2023
Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Advanced Literacy Methods	2023

### **Biola University, La Mirada, California**

Master of Arts in Education	2018
Thesis: <i>School Supports for Chinese International Students in American Christian High Schools</i>	
Bachelor of Arts in History	2009
Minor in Clarinet Performance	
Torrey Honors Institute Perpetual Member	

### **California Commission on Teaching Credentials**

Clear Credential	2014
Preliminary Credential in Social Science	2011
Supplementary Subject Matter Authorization in Instrumental Music	2011

### **Association of Christian Schools International**

Standard Certification	2011
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## – Professional Experience in Higher Education –

### **Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, Missouri**

Director of STL Teaching Fellows	2023-present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Leading an alternative certification Master of Arts in Teaching pathway serving high-need urban schools; incoming cohort sizes changed from an annual average of 14 to an average of over 18 through strategic recruitment and expanded district partnerships</li><li>● Improved student retention from 79% (cohorts 1-3) to 91% (cohorts 4-6) by implementing proactive advising and support systems</li><li>● Directed program enhancements including a redesigned Practicum course, new training for supervisors and instructors, and development of key resources (i.e. handbook and principal's guide)</li><li>● Overseeing certification test preparation and collaborating on program evaluation with the PRiME Center to support continuous improvement</li></ul>	
Instructor	2021-present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Graduate Course Instruction:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ EDI 5390: Teaching Reading: Contemporary Issues and Practices (3 credit hours); Summer 2024; Spring 2025</li><li>○ EDI 6250: Practicum Curriculum and Instruction (1 credit hour); Fall 2023, Spring 2024, Fall 2024, Spring 2025</li><li>○ EDI 6230: Seminar in Instruction; Summer 2023 (3 credit hours) (co-taught)</li></ul></li></ul>	

- Undergraduate Course Instruction:
  - EDF 3840: Professional Ethics (3 credit hours); Fall 2022
  - EDR 4970: Action Research for Educators (1 credit hour); Spring 2021, Fall, 2022, Spring 2023

#### Graduate Assistant

2020-2023

- Assisted professors in the following undergraduate courses as needed, suggesting course materials, inputting course content into Canvas, grading student work, assisting in teaching, conducting office hours, and teaching some class sessions independently:
  - EDF 3840: Professional Ethics (3 credit hours); Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2021, Spring 2022, Spring 2023
  - EDUC 1010: Introduction to Teaching: Sense of Identity (1 credit hour); Fall 2022, Spring 2023
  - EDSP 3700: Introduction to Disabilities Studies (3 credit hours); Fall 2021, Fall 2022
  - EDI 2000: Children's Media and Literature (3 credit hours); Fall 2020, Spring 2021, Fall 2021, Spring 2022
  - EDI 3940: Portfolio Development II (0 credit hours); Spring 2022
  - EDI 4880: Senior Inquiry (3 credit hours); Spring 2021
- Assisted faculty supervisors in consulting and preparing papers for submission to scholarly journals
- Provided support in developing and distributing the following School of Education assessments:
  - TCAD-E (Teacher Candidate Assessment of Dispositions—Educator Form)
  - Student perspectives on graduate-level qualitative methodology course offerings

#### Test Preparation Coordinator & Orientation Coordinator for STL Teaching Fellows Summer 2021 & Summer 2022

- Prepared materials, study sessions, and a website for the Missouri Content Area (MoCA) exams for 12 content areas; initiated and maintained an overview/record-keeping of student progress in the STL Teaching Fellows program
- Designed and coordinated annual induction ceremony and three-day orientation in summer 2022

### – Publications –

#### **Peer-Reviewed & Refereed**

Sywulka, K. (2025). Using positioning theory to investigate the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in classroom discussion. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 68, 495–505.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/jaal.1380>

Chittooran, M., & Sywulka, K. (2022). Trails-X to assess executive function in children and adults. In J. F. Carlson, K. F. Geisinger, & J. L. Jonson (Eds.), *The Twenty-Second Mental Measurements Yearbook*. Buros Institute.

#### **Other media**

Storm, K., Koch, T., Wegenda, L., Patel, S., Spence, L., Schlager, A., Parrish, B., Zhang, J., Chittooran, M., Sywulka, K. (2024). Let's P.L.A.Y. Education Manual.

<https://www.amazon.com/Lets-P-L-Y-Education-Manual/dp/B0D91RV48M>

Sywulka, K. (2022, July). School of Education unveils new name for alternative teacher certification pathway: STL Teaching Fellows @ SLU. *School of Education News & Events*.

<https://www.slu.edu/education/news/2022/stl-teaching-fellows-name-unveiling.php>

Sywulka, K. (2012, October). The testimony of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *The Examined Life, Wheatstone Ministries blog*.

Familia Sywulka. (2011). *Cuan Grande Es El* [Album]. Morales Productions.

## – Grants –

### **St. Louis Public Schools (SLPS) (\$516,000)**

Project Coordinator

2023-present

- Maintained correspondence and records with district, PI, and university grant office regarding annual awards (\$150,000 in 2023 and 2024; \$216,000 in 2025) for Master of Arts in Teaching scholarships for SLPS employees

### **Anonymous Private Foundation (\$490,000)**

Grant Writing Team Member & Project Coordinator

2022-present

- Assisted PI on proposal for two-year grant and renewal (\$110,000 annually in 2023 and 2024; \$135,000 in 2025 and 2026) awarded to STL Teaching Fellows for personnel, scholarships, and supports
- Assisting in record-keeping and correspondence with funders and university grant office

## – Presentations –

### **Peer-Reviewed Research Presentations**

- Price, E., Sywulka, K. (2025, July 28). *Arts-based approaches to social emotional learning and community in an early career urban education program*. Association of Teacher Educators Summer Conference, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2025, July 28). *Teacher beliefs and agency: The journey to supporting students in immigrant families in classroom discussions*. Association of Teacher Educators Summer Conference, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Vahle, C., Sywulka, K. (July 27, 2025). *Diversifying the teacher workforce and addressing the teacher shortage: Findings from a program evaluation of the STL Teaching Fellows*. Association of Teacher Educators Summer Conference, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2025, May 2). *Teachers' journeys toward supporting adolescent first and second generation students in classroom discussions*. Saint Louis University Graduate Student Association Research Symposium, Saint Louis, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, November 22). *Using Positioning Theory to investigate the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in classroom discussion*. National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention, Boston, MA, United States.
- Price, E., Sywulka, K. (2024, November 15). *Inviting artful explorations of identity: Lessons from supporting early career urban educators*. National Association for Multicultural Education International Conference, Anaheim, CA, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, November 14). *Teachers' journeys toward supporting culturally and linguistically diverse adolescent students in classroom discussions*. National Association for Multicultural Education International Conference, Anaheim, CA, United States.
- Sywulka, K., Price, E. (2024, November 1). *Inviting artful explorations of identity: Organizing a "Becoming Teachers" showcase*. Illinois Association of Teacher Educators Annual Meeting, Carbondale, IL, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, March 29). *The journey of una maestra: The role of double consciousness in becoming a teacher educator*. Association of Teacher Educators Annual Meeting, Anaheim, CA, United States.
- Goldstein, D., Sywulka, K. (2024, March 29). *Responsive mentoring: Supporting early career urban teachers through coaching circles*. Association of Teacher Educators Annual Meeting, Anaheim, CA, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2023, April 28). *Using Positioning Theory to investigate the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in classroom discussion*. Saint Louis University Graduate Student Association Research Symposium, Saint Louis, United States.
- Sywulka, K., Chittooran, M.M. (2022, March 10-12). *Secondary Chinese international student perceptions of school supports: A mixed methods study*. National Association for Multicultural Education Spring Virtual Conference, online.
- Chittooran, M.M., Sywulka, K. (2022, March 10-12). *The social construction of race: Issues and implications for education*. National Association for Multicultural Education Spring Virtual Conference, online.

- Sywulka, K., Chittooran, M.M., Rhode-Collins, D. (2022, February 14). *Teacher well-being during COVID-19*. Association of Teacher Educators Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2021, July 11). *Literature circles: Critical examination of our intentions in relation to our assessments*. National Council of Teachers of English, Literacies and Languages for All Summer Institute, online.
- Sywulka, K., Rhode-Collins, D. (2021, April 30). *Teacher wellness during COVID-19*. Saint Louis University Graduate Student Association Research Symposium, online.
- Sywulka, K. (2009, May). *It's all fun until someone gets hurt - Then it's hilarious: A proper application of humor as shown in Austen's Pride and Prejudice*. Biola University Torrey Honors Institute Spring Colloquium, La Mirada, CA, United States.

### **Refereed & Invited Professional Presentations**

- Sywulka, K. (2025, June 3). *Culturally responsive conversations*. ELevate, EducationPlus, St. Charles, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2025, April 1). *Culturally responsive conversations for first and second generation students*. Developing Resilience of St. Louis Children & Families, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, August 14). *Musical extension activities supporting multicultural education*. Mehlville School District, Mehlville, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, July 16). *Culturally responsive conversations: Launching & assessing truly inclusive classroom discussions*. Ink & Inspiration, Connected Learning STL, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, June 5-6). *Engaging multilingual learners in class discussions*. ELevate, EducationPlus, St. Charles, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, March 2). *Musical extension activities supporting multicultural education*. St. Louis Annual Educating for Change Conference 2024, Educators for Social Justice, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2023, June 15). *Engaging international students in class discussions: Positioning of transnational funds of knowledge towards providing equitable participation opportunities*. International Student Program Conference, Norcross, Georgia, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2023, July 14). *Participation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in classroom discussion*. Read Well Live Well, La Mirada, California, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2023, February 15). *Chinese international student perceptions of school supports: Findings from a study of three California Christian high schools*. "Let's Talk About" Segment, WAGlobal Network, online.
- Sywulka, K. (2022, June 22). *Musical extension activities for engaging students in children's literature*. Saint Louis University Summer Literacy Institute, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Chittooran, M.M., Sywulka, K. (2021, March 13). *What is race?*. Missouri Diocesan Commission on Dismantling Racism, online.
- Sywulka, K. (2017, June). *Three lessons from the life of Miss Sywulka, and three lessons from the book of Daniel* [Keynote]. Pacific Bay Christian High School Commencement, Pacifica, CA, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2007, March). *History of religion in Bolivia*. Biola University History Student Guild Special Event, La Mirada, CA, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2007, March). *Human trafficking*. Biola University History Student Guild Special Event, La Mirada, CA, United States.

### **Guest Lecturer Presentations**

- Sywulka, K. (2025, March 20). *A supportive fast track to becoming a certified teacher: STL Teaching Fellows at Saint Louis University*. EPE 5250: Contemporary Issues in Education Policy, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, October 9). *Musical extension activities for engaging students in children's literature*. EDUC 2400: Literature and the Arts: Tools of Social Justice, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, October 3). *Cultivating conversations in the content areas*. EDUC 3500: Curricular Foundations of Disciplinary Literacy (Grades 4-12), Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, February 28). *Musical extension activities for engaging students in children's literature*. EDUC 2400: Literature and the Arts: Tools of Social Justice, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO, United States.
- Sywulka, K. (2024, February 19; 2023, February 20; 2022, February 21). *Cultivating conversations in the content areas*. EDI 3200: Reading/Writing Content Fld., Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO, United States.

Sywulka, K. (2023, October 18). *Literature and music in kindergarten through grade 8 classrooms: Tools for social justice education*. EDUC 2400: Literature and the Arts: A Tool for Advocacy, Equity, and Identity (Kindergarten-Grade 8), Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO, United States.

Sywulka, K. (2023, October 9). *Narrowing focus as a researcher through creating databases of literature*. EPE 5050: Proseminar on Education Research, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, MO, United States.

### – Mentoring & Advising –

#### **Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri**

Academic Advisor	2023-present
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring, advising, and advocating for 21-35 Master of Arts in Teaching students annually</li> </ul>	
Undergraduate Honors Capstone Supervisor	2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Naji, Sumaya. (2022). <i>Implementation of tier 2 math instruction for second grade students struggling to meet academic expectations: An action research project</i>.</li> <li>• Christian, Tory. (2022). <i>Tier I supports for the least restrictive environment: Collaboration between specialists and general educators</i>.</li> </ul>	

### – Awards and Honors –

School of Education Staff Excellence Award, Saint Louis University	2024
Alpha Sigma Nu (Jesuit Honor Society), Saint Louis University	2023
Scholarship Recipient, Biola University School of Education	2010, 2012-2017
Scholarship Recipient, California Retired Teachers Association Whittier Chapter	2010
Super Star Employee, California Educational Center	2009
Epsilon Kappa Epsilon (Biola University Honor Society), Biola University	2009
President's Award, Biola University	2008
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awarded for excellence in character, academics and school service to one member of each soon-to-be graduating class; the only full-ride scholarship awarded by Biola University each year</li> </ul>	
Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society), Biola University	2008
Ruth White Memorial Scholarship Recipient, Whittier Soroptimists	2007
Dean's List, Biola University	2005-2009
Adult Symposium Winner, Music Teacher Association of California Composer's Today	2006, 2007, 2008
California Young Artist Runner-Up, Music Teachers National Association Composer's Contest	2006
Scholarship Recipient, Northrop Grumman	2005-2009

### – Professional Memberships –

International Literacy Association	2024-present
National Council of Teachers of English	2024-present
Missouri Association of Colleges for Teacher Education	2024-present
Association of Teacher Educators	2021-present
The National Association for Multicultural Education	2021-present
National Association of Music Educators	2017-2019
National Council for the Social Studies	2011-2017

### – Academic Service –

#### **Association for Teacher Educators**

Summer 2025 Conference, Local Arrangements Committee Member	2024-2025
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**Saint Louis University, Saint Louis, Missouri**

School of Education Assessment Advisory Committee	2023-present
School of Education 100th Year Anniversary Planning Committee Member	2024-2025
Committee Team Member on various Search Committees	2023-2025
B.A. in Education Literacy & Social Studies Curriculum Redesign Writing Team Member	2023

**Pacific Bay Christian High School, Pacifica, California**

History Department Head	2013-2017
Senior Class Advisor	2012-2017
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acted as liaison between students and administration to plan trips including snow trips, Disneyland trips, and trip to London, Paris and Rome through EF Tours</li> <li>Oversaw senior class representatives and supervised fundraisers, class gift and other senior events</li> </ul>	
Accreditation Committee Team Member	2011-2017
Student/Faculty Talent Show Coordinator	2011-2017
Sophomore Class Advisor	2011-2012

**Biola University, La Mirada, California**

History Student Guild, Founder and President	2006-2007
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**– Content Expertise & Consulting Experiences –**

*Seminar & Research Symposium Guest Judge*; Mary Institute & Saint Louis Country Day School, St. Louis, Missouri 2025

*Consultant*; Let's PLAY, St. Louis, Missouri 2023-2025

- Provided content expertise in curriculum writing for nonprofit dedicated to health education

*Panelist*; Mentoring Matters, Department of Psychology, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri 2024

*Workshop Presenter*; St. Martin de Porres School, Belize City, Belize 2023

- Co-led four day professional development workshop for elementary and middle school faculty
- Personalized course topics and materials based on pre-workshop survey and collaboration with school leaders; constructed “Real Math Strategies for the Belizean Classroom” workshop which focused on multisensory learning, culturally responsive teaching for multilingual learners, and building academic vocabulary
- Partnered with the the Belize Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology to offer continuing education credits through the Teacher Learning Institute

*Performing Arts Sound Recordings Station Chair*; United States Patent and Trademark Office National Summer Teacher Institute, St. Louis, Missouri 2023

*Express the Music Essay Contest Preliminary Judge*; St. Louis Symphony Orchestra Volunteer Association, St. Louis, Missouri 2023

*Panelist*; School of Education New Graduate Student Orientation, Saint Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri 2022

*Study Group Co-Leader*; Saint Louis University Summer Literacy Institute, St. Louis, Missouri 2022

*Curriculum Consultant*; Missouri Diocesan Commission on Dismantling Racism, St. Louis, Missouri 2020

*Curriculum Consultant*; Griscom School, St. Louis, Missouri 2020

*Camp Leader & English as a Second Language (ESL) Instructor*; Footsteps Missions, Taipei, Taiwan, Seoul, S. Korea, Shanghai, China 2014, 2016, 2018

- Led international teaching teams; coached volunteers in cross-cultural communication, classroom strategies, and travel preparedness
- Taught beginner and advanced ESL to students (ages 8–18) and adults; collaborated with local partners to ensure program success

*Clarinet Section Clinician & Clarinet Ensemble Leader*; California High School Entertainment Unit, Whittier, California 2007-2011

*All-District Honor Band Clarinet Clinician*; Whittier Union High School District, Whittier, California 2007

## – Professional Experience in K-12 Education –

### **Tower Grove Christian Academy, St. Louis, Missouri**

Preschool & Elementary Music Teacher 2019-2023

- Taught general music classes at an urban private school for students two years old through 5th grade; created and taught middle school music classes in Spring 2023
- Managed yearly budget (around \$500 a year); increased ukulele inventory and restarted 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade ukulele instruction
- Designed and led annual Christmas and Spring musical performances
- Adapted curriculum and delivery for online and socially distanced learning in 2020 and 2021

Elementary Art & Library Teacher 2019-2020

- Led K-5 art and library classes; organized Scholastic book fairs annually
- Adapted to online learning during Spring 2020 by initiating virtual activities, including biweekly story times and weekly art club via Zoom to foster student engagement

### **Hamilton Unified School District, Hamilton City, California**

K-12 Music Teacher 2017-2019

- Restarted K–12 music program in two rural Title I schools after a year-long gap; taught general music (TK–5), alternative high school music class, and directed middle and high school bands.
- Produced Winter and Spring concerts involving multiple districts; facilitated student trips to professional performances and adjudicated festivals.
- Developed inclusive curriculum for students with IEPs and English language learners (40%+ ELL, many from migrant families).
- Managed \$2,500 annual budget; led fundraising efforts totaling \$2,000/year and \$39,000 in major gifts.

### **Pacific Bay Christian High School, Pacifica, California**

High School History Teacher 2011-2017

- Taught World History, U.S. History, Government, and Economics at a private high school serving students from San Francisco, the coast, and Silicon Valley.
- Adapted instruction for diverse learners, including international students (20%; primarily from China), integrated technology such as Chromebooks and G Suite.
- Organized guest speakers (e.g., Holocaust survivors, SR-71 pilot, Japanese internment camp internee) and led field trips to regional historical sites and museums.

### **Graves Middle School, South Whittier, California**

Middle School History Student Teacher

2010-2011

- Taught 7th Grade World History, and 8th Grade US History at a public Title I middle school; adapted instruction for diverse learners including over a third of students designated as English Language Learners
- Organized field trips and activities such as “Africa Celebration Night”, 200 attended
- Intervened with low grade and low skill students through afterschool re-teaching, quiz/test retakes, and parent involvement; collaborated on original curriculum and common assessments for department use

### **– Other Professional Experiences –**

### **Sywulka Educational Services, Whittier, Pacifica, and Orland, California, and St. Louis, Missouri**

Studio Owner, Music Instructor

2008-present

- Providing private lessons in piano, clarinet, and flute to students ages 4 through adult, coordinating performance and recording opportunities
- Managing student recruitment, scheduling, and payments; adapted lessons and recitals to online and outdoor formats in Spring 2020.

Founder and Teacher: Art Through the Ages Art Camp

2020

- Founded and taught a four-week online art camp for K–6 students at Tower Grove Christian Academy during the COVID-19 pandemic, integrating art projects with cross-curricular historical themes

### **Wheatstone Ministries, Southern California**

Wheatstone Academy Mentor

2012

- Led small group Socratic dialogues on Plato’s *Phaedo* at a high school level summer conference

### **Southern California Academy of Music, Whittier, California**

Music Instructor

2009-2011

- Taught private and semi-private lessons in piano, clarinet, flute, and violin
- Introduced composition techniques to all students, several winning awards in PTA Reflections competitions
- Developed curriculum and taught group music classes in schools and community centers

### **Graves Middle School, Whittier, California**

AVID Tutor (7th and 8th Grade)

2010-2011

### **Biola University, La Mirada, California**

Department Assistant, Office of Vice President of Advancement

2007-2009

- Prepared presentations and assisted in administrative and clerical tasks
- Student editor for Willmer, W. K. (2008). *A revolution in generosity: Transforming stewards to be rich toward God*. Moody Publishers.