

Kate Barnes, Ph.D.

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ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Texas A&M University, Education Research Center (ERC)

Postdoctoral Research Associate

College Station, TX

July 2025 – Present

- Analyze state longitudinal data to generate evidence for educator preparation programs; maintain an active research agenda evaluating the association between school calendar structures and broad educational outcomes.
- Lead applied research on Texas education issues, including grant development and framing research questions to inform state policy.
- Manage cross-sector stakeholder engagement, including partnership development, bi-weekly communications, and end-to-end event execution.
- Support graduate student development through structured mentorship, professional guidance, and leadership of student-focused initiatives.

EDUCATION

University of Arkansas

Education Policy, Ph.D.

Fayetteville, AR

May 2025

Dissertation: Rewriting the School Calendar: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Four-Day School Week Implementation in Arkansas

Arkansas State University

Educational Leadership, M.S. in Education

Jonesboro, AR

August 2019

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Sustainability & Environmental Studies, B.A.

Knoxville, TN

May 2014

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

University of Arkansas, Department of Education Reform

Graduate Research Assistant

Fayetteville, AR

August 2021 – May 2025

- Collaborated with EDRE's Office for Education Policy to organize and implement research projects with Arkansas public schools focusing on impacts of adopting a four-day school week, early predictors of students placed in alternative learning environments, and various structural school models or educational paths available to students.
- Communicated research findings to diverse stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, and community members, through presentations, reports, and other media.

NWA Education Service Cooperative, Office for Education Policy

Strategic Data Fellow

Fayetteville, AR

June 2024 – May 2025

- Collaborated with school district leadership to conduct research for and with member schools of the NWA Educational Service Cooperative.
- Created tailored reports for districts highlighting growth, achievement, and programmatic outcomes, with breakdowns by school building.
- Developed clear visualizations and user-friendly reports to communicate key metrics to district stakeholders.

To&Through Project, UChicago Consortium on School Research

Data and Research Intern

Chicago, IL

June 2023 – September 2023

- Categorized elementary schools by school type in alignment with high school types for analysis, helping policymakers understand how to best prepare students for success.
- Participated in peer coding reviews and working groups to develop skills in R and Git.

PUBLICATIONS

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Barnes, K. (Forthcoming). Is Reducing the Week Reducing Teacher Burnout? An Analysis of Teacher Well-Being in Four-Day Districts. *Educational Researcher*.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. C. (2025). We Wanted to Do Something Innovative: Exploring Motivations of Arkansas Districts Adopting Four-Day School Weeks or Year-Round Calendars. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2025.2491438>

REPORTS

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2025). Four-Day School Week Across State Lines: Insights on Attendance from Missouri and Arkansas. *Education Report*. PRiME Center, St. Louis University.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2024). Professional Learning Communities and Student Outcomes: A Quantitative Analysis of the PLC at Work Model in Arkansas Schools. *Arkansas Education Report*. Office for Education Policy, University of Arkansas.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). Exploring Academic Outcomes in Arkansas Schools: A Study of Four-Day School Week and Year-Round Calendar Districts. *Arkansas Education Report*. Office for Education Policy, University of Arkansas.

Djita, R., Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). English Language Learners and Their Postsecondary Education Outcomes: Evidence from Arkansas. *Working Paper*. Department of Education Reform, University of Arkansas.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). We Wanted to Do Something Innovative: Exploring Motivations of Arkansas Districts Adopting Four-Day School Weeks or Year-Round Calendars. *Arkansas Education Report*. Office for Education Policy, University of Arkansas.

McGee, J., & Barnes, K. (2023). Analysis of Arkansas's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs (Arkansas LEARNS Report 4A). *Executive Order Report*.

Barnes, K., McKenzie, S., & Reid, C. (2022). Movin' On Up: An Examination of Value-Added Growth During School Transition Years in Arkansas. *Arkansas Education Report*.

RESEARCH AND POLICY BRIEFS

Barnes, K. (2026). Into DEEP: Finding Schools Where Black Students Thrive in Texas (Research Brief). Education Research Center, Texas A&M University.

Barnes, K. (2026). Distance to Degrees: How Proximity Shapes Opportunity in Texas (Research Brief). Education Research Center, Texas A&M University.

Barnes, K. (2026). Can Intensive Advising Open Doors to Selective Colleges? Evidence from the EMERGE Fellowship (Research Brief). Education Research Center, Texas A&M University.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2024). Effects of PLC at Work in Arkansas on Student Outcomes (Policy Brief). OEP Policy Brief.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). Exploring Academic Outcomes in Arkansas Schools: A Study of Four-Day School Week and Year-Round Calendar Districts (Policy Brief). OEP Policy Brief.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). Explorations of Motivations for Adopting a Four-Day School Week or Year-Round Calendar: Evidence from Arkansas (Policy Brief). OEP Policy Brief.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2022). An Examination of School Transitions on Value-Added Growth in Arkansas (Policy Brief). OEP Policy Brief.

NEWS & MEDIA

McKinnon, E. (2025, May 17). Smaller districts see some benefit of shorter weeks. *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*.

Moore, M. (Reporter). (2025, April 8). A bill in the Arkansas Legislature threatens the future of the four-day school weeks. In *Ozarks at Large*. KUAF, National Public Radio.

Moore, M. (Reporter). (2024, June 27). "No statistically significant results" from Solution Tree's program according to recent study. In *Ozarks at Large*. KUAF, National Public Radio.

Hardy, B. (2024, June 3). Education vendor Solution Tree abandons ship on hefty state contract. *Arkansas Times*.

Snyder, J. (2024b, June 3). Solution Tree CEO requests that Arkansas Department of Education withdraw proposed contract from state's review process. *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*.

Snyder, J. (2024a, May 25). Report on 7-year Arkansas education contract finds no significant gains; state considering \$99.4M renewal. *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*.

Travis, J. (Reporter). (2023, November 22). Lincoln Consolidated School District trims school week to benefit mental health. In *Ozarks at Large*. KUAF, National Public Radio.

Kellams, K. (Director). (2023, March 3). Why Schools Consider Four-Day Weeks. In *Ozarks at Large*. KUAF, National Public Radio.

Barnes, K. (2022, April 6). Building Transitions Lead to Lower Value-Added Growth for Middle-School Students. *Blog – Office for Education Policy*.

PRESENTATIONS

- Barnes, K. (2026). Holding Time Constant: Four-Day School Weeks and Student Achievement in Arkansas. Paper Presentation. Annual Association for Education Finance & Policy (AEFP) Conference, Chicago, IL, March 21, 2026.
- Barnes, K. (2025). Does Reducing the Week Reduce Teacher Burnout? An Analysis of Teacher Well-Being in Four-Day Districts. Paper Presentation. MidSouth Education Policy Workshop, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY, October 17, 2025.
- Barnes, K. (2025). Assessing Teacher Burnout: A Comparative Study of Traditional and Four-Day School Week Districts. Paper Presentation. Annual Association for Education Finance & Policy (AEFP) Conference, Washington, D.C., March 15, 2025.
- Barnes, K. (2025). Professional Learning Communities and Student Outcomes: A Quantitative Analysis of the PLC at Work Model. Paper Presentation. Annual Association for Education Finance & Policy (AEFP) Conference, Washington, D.C., March 13, 2025.
- Barnes, K. (2024). Four-Day School Week in Arkansas: What We Know So Far. Panel Presentation. LEARNing Full Speed Ahead: What Progress Have We Made So Far Conference, Little Rock, AR, December 11, 2024.
- Barnes, K. (2024). Assessing Teacher Burnout: A Comparative Study of Traditional and Four-Day School Week Districts. Paper Presentation. Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM) Fall Research Conference, National Harbor, MD, November 21, 2024.
- Barnes, K., Chabra, P., Medler, A., Molloy, M., & Wallace, M. (2024). RPP Insights from Early Career and Student Scholars. Panel Presentation. National Network of Education Research Practice Partnerships (NNERPP) Annual Forum, Richmond, VA, July 25, 2024.
- Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2024). We Wanted to Do Something Innovative: Exploring Motivations of Arkansas Districts Adopting Four-Day School Weeks or Year-Round Calendars. Paper Presentation. American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conference, Philadelphia, PA, April 11, 2024.
- Barnes, K. (2024). Exploring the Impact of Four-Day School Weeks on Educational Choice and Access: A Quantitative Analysis in Arkansas. Paper Presentation. International School Choice and Reform (ISCRC) Conference, Madrid, Spain, January 7, 2024.
- Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). We Wanted to Do Something Innovative: Exploring Motivations of Arkansas Districts Adopting Four-Day School Weeks or Year-Round Calendars. Paper Presentation. Annual Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA) Conference, Pensacola, FL, November 10, 2023. ***invited*
- Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). We Wanted to Do Something Innovative: Exploring Motivations of Arkansas Districts Adopting Four-Day School Weeks or Year-Round Calendars. Poster Presentation. Four-Day School Week Conference, Corvallis, OR, October 20, 2023.
- Djita, R., Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). English Language Learners and Their Post-Secondary Education Outcomes: Evidence from Arkansas. Roundtable Presentation. American Educational Research Association (AERA) Conference, Chicago, IL, April 14, 2023.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). Impacts of Categorical Funding Policies on Alternative School Placements. Paper Presentation. Annual Association for Education Finance & Policy (AEFP) Conference, Denver, CO, March 23, 2023.

Djita, R., Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). English Language Learners and Their Post-Secondary Education Outcomes: Evidence from Arkansas. Paper Presentation. Annual Association for Education Finance & Policy (AEFP) Conference, Denver, CO, March 23, 2023.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). We Wanted to Do Something Innovative: Exploring Motivations of Arkansas Districts Adopting Four-Day School Weeks or Year-Round Calendars. Paper Presentation. Moving Arkansas Education Forward Conference, Little Rock, AR, February 16, 2023.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2022). Understanding the Early Predictors for Alternative School Placement: Evidence from Arkansas. Paper Presentation. Annual Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA) Conference, Little Rock, AR, November 10, 2022.

Djita, R., Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2022). English Language Learners and Their Post-Secondary Education Outcomes: Evidence from Arkansas. Annual Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA) Conference, Little Rock, AR, November 9, 2022.

Barnes, K. (2022). Movin' On Up: An Examination of Value-Added Growth During School Transition Years in Arkansas. Paper Presentation. Arkansas Department of Education Summit, Hot Springs, AR, July 12, 2022.

Barnes, K. (2022). Predictors for Entering an Alternative Learning Environment in Arkansas. Poster Presentation. Annual Association for Education Finance & Policy (AEFP) Conference, Denver, CO, March 17, 2022.

HONORS & AWARDS

Outstanding Doctoral Student, UARK College of Education & Health Professions	2025
Emerging Education Policy Scholars (EEPS), Thomas B. Fordham Institute	2025
James E. McLean Distinguished Research Paper Award, MSERA	2023

ACADEMIC SERVICE

Brownbag Lecture Coordinator, EDRE	2022 – 2025
Lecture Series Coordinator, EDRE	2022 – 2025

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM)	2024 – Present
American Educational Research Association (AERA)	2023 – Present
Mid-South Educational Research Association (MSERA)	2022 – Present
Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP)	2021 – Present

MISCELLANEOUS EXPERIENCE

TEACHING

Quantitative Analytical Techniques for Education Policy – Ph.D. in Education Policy, Fall 2023
University of Arkansas (Teaching Assistant)

Research Seminar in Education Policy – Ph.D. in Education Policy, Spring 2023, Spring 2024
University of Arkansas (Teaching Assistant)

Owl Creek School

5th and 6th Grade Teacher, Science and Mathematics

Fayetteville, AR

August 2016 – May 2021

Ozark Natural Science Center

Teacher Naturalist

Huntsville, AR

August 2015 – May 2016

City of Fayetteville

AmeriCorps Volunteer, Recycling & Trash Collection

Fayetteville, AR

October 2014 – August 2015