

Kate Barnes, Ph.D.

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Pronouns: She/Her
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Academic Positions

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

College Station, TX
July 2025 – Present

- Conduct applied quantitative research using Texas Education Agency longitudinal data, including retention and effectiveness analyses for a multi-state evaluation of alternative teacher certification; maintain an independent research agenda on school calendar policy.
- Direct the center's research brief series, carrying faculty studies from manuscript through author review, figure development, design, and deposit in the university's institutional repository; authored the editorial and visual style guides governing all center publications.
- Produce the center's biweekly research publication for policymakers, practitioners, and partners, growing subscribership by more than half; designed and built the submission, curation, and production systems behind the publication line, including a public research feed.
- Established and direct the center's events function, including the invited speaker series, external advisory board, and faculty steering committee; created the graduate ambassador program, recruiting and supervising seven graduate students across 2026.
- Co-led development of an internal planning grant proposal, from request-for-proposal analysis and budget preparation through submission.

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.

Teaching Experience

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

Fall 2023

Research Seminar in Education Policy — Ph.D. in Education Policy,
University of Arkansas (Teaching Assistant)

Spring 2023, Spring 2024

Owl Creek School
5th and 6th Grade Teacher, Science and Mathematics

Fayetteville, AR
August 2017 – May 2021

Decatur Middle School
5th Grade Teacher, Science and Mathematics

Decatur, AR
August 2016 – May 2017

Publications

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Barnes, K. (Forthcoming). Four-Day School Weeks and Teacher Well-Being: Evidence from a Statewide Study. *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 & Working Papers

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 Briefs

Barnes, K. (2026). More Than Coursework: Preparing Teachers to Educate Students With Disabilities. ERC Research Brief. Education Research Center, Texas A&M University. Based on research by Nagro, Macedonia, Raines, Day, & Parker.

Barnes, K. (2026). Equity in Practice: How New Teachers Bring Fairness Into the Classroom. ERC Research Brief. Education Research Center, Texas A&M University. Based on research by Kwok, Davis, Halabi, Waddington, Huston, & Hemsley.

Barnes, K. (2026). [The Economics of Encouragement: Can a Single Email Shape What Students Study?](#). ERC Research Brief. Education Research Center, Texas A&M University. Based on research by Edwards & Meer.

Barnes, K. (2026). [Managing Without Mandate: A Nationwide Review of State Training Laws](#). ERC Research Brief. Education Research Center, Texas A&M University. Based on research by Svajda-Hardy & Kwok.

Barnes, K. (2026). [Into DEEP: Finding Schools Where Black Students Thrive in Texas](#). ERC Research Brief. Education Research Center, Texas A&M University. Based on research by Williams, Richardson, & Lewis.

Barnes, K. (2026). [Distance to Degrees: How Proximity Shapes Opportunity in Texas](#). ERC Research Brief. Education Research Center, Texas A&M University. Based on research by Acton, Cortes, Miller, & Morales.

Barnes, K. (2026). [Can Intensive Advising Open Doors to Selective Colleges? Evidence From the EMERGE Fellowship](#). ERC Research Brief. Education Research Center, Texas A&M University. Based on research by Holzman, Chukhray, & Thrash.

Policy Briefs

Barnes, K. (2025). [What We Know: The Four-Day School Week in Arkansas](#) (Policy Brief). Office for Education Policy, University of Arkansas.

McKenzie, S., Barnes, K., & Reid, C. (2024). [Effects of PLC at Work in Arkansas on Student Academic Outcomes](#) (Policy Brief). OEP Policy Brief.

Barnes, K., & McKenzie, S. (2023). [Exploration of Academic Outcomes in Arkansas's Four-Day School Weeks and Year-Round Calendars](#) (Policy Brief). OEP Policy Brief.

McKenzie, S., McGee, J., & Barnes, K. (2023). [Exploration of Motivations for Adopting a Four-Day School Week or Year Round Calendars: Evidence from Arkansas](#) (Policy Brief). OEP Policy Brief.

McKenzie, S., McGee, J., Barnes, K., & Reid, C. (2022). [An Examination of School Transition 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.
- 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

Reviewer, Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP) Annual Conference	2027
Peer Reviewer, <i>Gifted Child Quarterly</i>	2026
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

Methods & Tools

Methods: applied econometrics and program evaluation, including staggered difference-in-differences, propensity score matching, and fixed effects; mixed methods, including validated survey instruments, semi-structured interviewing, and thematic analysis

Tools: R, Stata, Git

Data: student- and school-level administrative data, state longitudinal data systems, restricted-use and public sources

Additional Experience

Ozark Natural Science Center	Huntsville, AR
Teacher Naturalist	August 2015 – May 2016
City of Fayetteville	Fayetteville, AR
AmeriCorps Volunteer, Recycling & Trash Collection	October 2014 – August 2015