

Melissa M. Nelson, Ed.D.

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EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Doctor of Education: Administrative & Policy Studies, Educational Leadership

Dissertation: "Educator Literacy Concerning Elementary Students' Anxiety and Depressive Disorders"

CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, California, Pennsylvania

Administrative Certificate, Principal K-12

CALIFORNIA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, California, Pennsylvania

Master of Education: Elementary Education/Special Education with Dual Certification

With Honors

GANNON UNIVERSITY, Erie, Pennsylvania

Master of Education: Curriculum and Instruction

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

General Certificate: Paralegal Institute

Lambda Epsilon Chi: National Honor Society in Paralegal/Legal Assistant Studies

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Bachelor of Arts: Interdisciplinary Studies: Child Psychology, Communication Disorders, and Criminal Justice

UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND RESEARCH ADVISING EXPERIENCE

University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA

- **Assistant Professor of Practice**
 - **Courses**
 - Competent Management of Student Services, Doctoral Course, School of Education
 - Principal Certification Program, Internship Supervisor, School of Education
 - Public Leadership: School Law, School of Education
 - School Health, Mental Health, and Safety, Principal Certification Course, School of Education
- **Adjunct Faculty**
 - **Courses**
 - Competent Management of Student Services, Doctoral Course, School of Education
 - School Health, Mental Health, and Safety, Principal Certification Course, School of Education
- **Guest Lecturer**
 - Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Fellows Course on School Consultation, School of Medicine
 - Competent Management of Human Resources, Doctoral Course, School of Education
 - Public Leadership: School Law, School of Education

- **Internship Mentor**
 - Principal Certification Program, School of Education
- **Doctoral Dissertation Committee Member**
 - “Addressing Anxiety and Depression in the Classroom”
 - “Effective Intervention for Subjective Disciplinary Incidents at the Secondary Level”
 - “Evaluating an Online Mental Health Literacy Curriculum for K-12 Staff”
 - “Helping Educational Leaders Navigate School Safety Resources to Improve Their School Crisis Prevention and Intervention Practices”
 - “Improving Mental Health Literacy of High School Educators”
 - “Increasing Parent Engagement in the Transition Planning Process for Students with IEPs”
 - “Middle School Student Assistance Program Evaluation”
 - “Trauma Reactions in Social Work Students: Increasing Awareness of PTSD and Self-Care Through the PTSD Coach Application”

New York Medical College, Vallhalla, New York

- **Guest Lecturer**
 - Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Fellows Course on School Consultation

Penn West University of PA, California, PA

- **Adjunct Faculty**
 - Educational Research and Dissemination: Student Motivation, School of Education
 - Introduction to Mental Health Issues in School Aged Children for the Pre- Service Teacher, School of Education
 - Livetext Portfolio Development, School of Education

NATIONAL/REGIONAL/STATE EXPERIENCE

Park Dietz & Associates, Inc., Newport Beach, CA

- K12 Education Forensic Expert
 - Expert Witness: Civil Litigation matters involving “Educator Standard of Care”

Federal Bureau of Investigation, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia Field Offices

- Threat Assessment and Threat Management (TATM) K12 Subject Matter Expert Consultant

United States Department of Homeland Security

- Public-Private Analytic Exchange Program Participant (AEP), 2024-2025
 - Preventing Violent Extremism in Communities Tool Kit Team

Southwestern PA Threat Assessment Hub

- K12 Schools Subject Matter Expert
 - Department of Homeland Security, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency Grant
 - Member of multi-disciplinary team providing Behavior Threat Assessment and Management, and Suicide Screen Consultation, Needs Assessments, and Training to K12+, Religious Organizations, Medical

Sigma 7/RSM Risk and Strategic Management, Corp.

- Behavior Threat Assessment and Management Training Project Senior Subject Matter Expert
 - Training Development and Facilitator of Training
 - Behavior Threat Assessment and Management Team Training
 - Behavior Threat Assessment and Management Scenario-Based Training
- School Safety and Security Training Project Subject Matter Expert
 - Curriculum Writing, Training Development, and Facilitator of Training for all PA School Employees in the following areas:
 - Behaviors of Concern
 - Behavioral Health Awareness
 - Emergency Drills Training
 - Suicide and Bullying Awareness
 - Trauma-Informed Awareness
 - Curriculum Writing, Training Development, and Facilitator of Training for School Safety and Security Coordinators
 - Act 55 Mandated Coordinator Training
 - Behavioral Health Awareness for K-5, 6-8, 9-12
 - Emergency Operations Plan Development Workshop
 - Implementation of the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale in K12
 - Unpacking the Act 55 Standards

New Story Schools

- Senior Vice President of Educational Services
 - Led educational and leadership initiatives across 6 states in specialized schools for children and adolescents with significant social, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive disabilities
- Vice President of Academic Initiatives

Mount Lebanon School District

- Principal, Washington Elementary School
- Co-Chair, Mount Lebanon School District Social, Emotional, Behavioral, and Physical Health COVID-Crisis Recovery Committee
- Coordinator, Mount Lebanon School District Student Assistance Program
- Supervising Principal, Elementary Counseling Department

Mount Lebanon School District

- Assistant Principal, Mellon Middle School
- Administrative Co-Director, South Hills Area School District Association School Crisis Response Team
- Developer/Coordinator, Mount Lebanon School District Suicide Prevention Plan
- Supervising Principal, Secondary Counseling Department

EMERGENCY PSYCHIATRIC AND LEGAL SYSTEM EXPERIENCE

Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic

- Emergency Room Clinical Evaluator

- Allegheny County Mobile Crisis Field Team Clinical Specialist
- Allegheny County Crisis Phone Line Clinician
- Crawford County Crisis Phone Line Clinician

Allegheny East MH/MR

- Forensic Liaison
- Administrative Case Manager

Allegheny County Center for Victims of Violent Crime

- Juvenile Criminal Justice System Victim Advocate
- Adult Criminal Justice System Victim Advocate
- On-Call Crisis Responder

PUBLIC AND SPECIAL EDUCATION SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

Canon-McMillan School District

- General Education Teacher, Grade 4
- Learning Support Teacher, Grades K-4

Pittsburgh Public Schools

- American Sign Language Coordinator and Instructor, Dilworth Traditional Academy
- Educational Assistant for Special Education Students, Dilworth Traditional Academy

Pressley Ridge School for The Deaf

- Family Liaison Specialist
- Teacher/Counselor

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Consulting

- University of Pittsburgh, Department of Psychiatry and School of Nursing, SPARC Life, Social Media & Suicide Prevention Among Adolescents Research Center
 - NIMH funded: imHere4U Study
- University of Pittsburgh Undergraduate Research Department
 - Tree of Life Student Memorial Project
- Extra Mile Education Foundation
 - Behavioral Health Awareness for K-8 Educators
 - Deescalation Training
 - Trauma Informed Practices
- Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children
 - Trauma-Informed Focus on Educators

- Implementation of Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale and Associated Policy, Protocols, and Procedures for Suicide Prevention and Intervention
 - Armstrong School District, Kittanning, PA
 - Avonworth School District, Emsworth, PA
 - Burrell School District, Lower Burrell, PA
 - Canon-McMillan School District, Canonsburg, PA
 - Capital Area Intermediate Unit 15, Enola, PA
 - Capital Area Intermediate Unit 15, Nonpublic Schools, Enola, PA
 - Elk Lake School District, Springville, PA
 - Environmental Charter Schools, Pittsburgh, PA
 - Fort LeBoeuf School District, Waterford, PA
 - Fox Chapel Area School District, Pittsburgh, PA
 - Indiana Area School District, Indiana, PA
 - Intermediate Unit 2, Non-Public Schools, Pittsburgh, PA
 - Intermediate Unit 10, State College, PA
 - Intermediate Unit 15, Harrisburg, PA
 - Jim Thorpe Area School District, Jim Thorpe, PA
 - Kiski Area School District, Vandergrift, PA
 - Middle Bucks Institute of Technology, Jamison, PA
 - Mount Lebanon School District, Pittsburgh, PA
 - Panther Valley School District, Landsford, PA
 - Peters Township School District, McMurray, PA
 - Pittsburgh – Mt Oliver Intermediate Unit 2, Nonpublic Schools, Pittsburgh, PA
 - Plum Borough School District, Pittsburgh, PA
 - Punxsutawney Area School District, Punxsutawney, PA
 - Ringgold School District, New Eagle, PA
 - Somerset Area School District, Somerset, PA
 - West Branch School District, Morrisdale, PA
 - West Greene School District, Waynesburg, PA

Conference and Professional Development Keynotes, Presentations, and Panel Discussions

- “Suicide Awareness and Prevention: The SRO as a Critical Support,” 2025, PA School Resource Officer (PASRO) Annual State Conference
- “School Safety and Security Workshop: Learn from Leaders,” 2025, Sigma7/RSM
- “Ready. Aim. Fire. 40 Minutes to Prepare Yourself to Lead Safe and Secure Climates and Cultures,” 2025, 22nd Annual Jean E. Winsand Workshop for Women in School Leadership
- “Navigating the current Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management landscape in K12: What we've learned and how we can improve our systems,” 2025, IU20/IU21 Joint Superintendent Advisory Council Meeting
- “Building Mental Health Literacy in Schools: The Why, What, and How,” 2025, IU3 Workshop
- “Understanding Trauma in the Children You Serve and Protect,” 2024, Intermediate Unit 1 Workshop for School-Based Law Enforcement and First Responders
- “Difficulty Engaging with K12 School-Based Teams? Here’s How to Get Behind the Curtains,” 2024, University of Pennsylvania Headsup/ABCT Annual Conference
- “Engaging the Community in Care for Individuals with Early Psychosis Panel Discussion,” 2024, University of Pennsylvania Headsup/ABCT 56th Annual Convention

- “Leading Emergency Preparedness and Crisis Management,” 2024, Carbon-Lehigh Intermediate Unit Superintendent’s Symposium
- “Contemplating the Unthinkable: What Health Professionals Need to Understand about Targeted Violence and Mass Shootings,” 2024, UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, TiPS Behavioral Health and Pediatric Primary Care Fall Virtual Conference
- “Bringing the Two Worlds Together: Schools and Coordinated Specialty Care Programs as Allies for Youth with Psychosis,” 2024, Grand Rounds: Clinical Care in First Episode Psychosis, University of Pennsylvania, University of Pittsburgh, University of Maryland
- “Finding Goodness in the Roses and the Thorns,” 2024, Capital Area Intermediate Unit’s Learning and Growing Conference for Educators
- “Navigating School Systems for Children with Disabilities,” 2024, UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, TiPS Behavioral Health and Pediatric Primary Care Spring Conference
- “In the Midst of It All, We Shine,” 2024, Central Pennsylvania School Counselor Institute Annual Conference
- “School-Based Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management: Missteps and Solutions,” 2023, University of Pittsburgh Tri-State Area School Study
- “Never Worry Alone: School-based Supports for Crisis,” 2023, Green Tree School and Services Conference for Philadelphia Non-public Schools
- “Never Worry Alone: School-based Supports for Crisis,” 2023, Capital Area Intermediate Unit Joint Conference
- “Understanding 504s and IEPs,” 2023, UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh, TiPS Behavioral Health and Pediatric Primary Care Grand Rounds
- “Schools: What Do I Need to Know and Understand to Advocate for My Clients?” 2023, UPMC Western Behavioral Health, Child and Adolescent Behavioral Health Services
- “Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management Essentials,” Friends of Safe Schools, U.S.A., 2023, School Safety Symposium
- “Grief and Grieving,” Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children, 2022, Envision Conference
- “Implementation of the Columbia Suicide Screen in K-12 Schools,” 2023, STAR (Services for Teens at Risk) Annual Conference
- “Implementation of the Columbia Suicide Screen in K-12 Schools,” 2022, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Crisis Management Summit
- “Increasing our Mental Health Literacy,” PA School Counselors Association, 66th Annual Statewide Conference
- “Preventing Peer and Cyber Bullying,” 2022, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Western Psychiatric Conference on Violence Prevention, Intervention, and Recovery
- “Supporting the Mental Health of our Employees,” 2022, Virginia Association of Independent Specialized Education Facilities, Annual Conference
- “The Power of Relationships: Changing the Trajectory for Adjudicated Youth,” 2022, Teacher Educators for Children with Behavior Disorders, National Conference
- “An Equestrian Intervention Program for Adolescents in an Alternative Education Program,” 2022, Teacher Educators for Children with Behavior Disorders, National Conference

School District Professional Development Presentations

- “Behavioral Health Awareness for Educators,” Laurel Highlands School District
- “Behavioral Health Awareness for Educators,” Oil City School District
- “Behavioral Health Awareness Through a Trauma-Sensitive Lens,” Fort LeBeouf School District
- “Behavioral Health Awareness for Elementary Educators,” Upper St. Clair School District
- “Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Screener Training and Implementation,” Mount Lebanon School District

- “Confessions, Goals, and Hopes of a Former School Administrator,” Peters Township School District
- “Increasing the Mental Health Literacy of Educators During Recovery Work,” Southcentral PA School Consortium
- “Leading Yourself and Others: Relationships Matter,” Rivermont Schools, Virginia
- “Managing Uncertainty: Strategies for Managing Historic School Reopening Issues During Times of Turmoil and Extreme Uncertainty,” University of Pittsburgh Tri-State Area School Study
- “Mental Health Literacy: Great Understanding = Great Relationships,” Big Spring School District
- “Mental Health Literacy: Words and Relationships Matter,” Forest Hills School District
- “Mental Health Literacy in Our Schools: Post Training Follow-up,” Southcentral PA School Consortium
- “Navigating the current Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management landscape in K12: what we’ve learned and how we can improve our practices,” Intermediate Unit 5, Principal Retreat, Edinboro, PA
- “Navigating the current Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management landscape in K12: what we’ve learned and how we can improve our practices,” West Jefferson Hills School District Leadership Team
- “Navigating the current Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management landscape in K12: what we’ve learned and how we can improve our practices,” Conneaut School District Leadership Team
- “Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Health Recovery for Students,” Forest Hills School District
- “Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Health Recovery for Students,” Mount Lebanon School District
- “Suicide Awareness, Prevention, and Intervention in K12,” Environmental Charter Schools
- “Supporting Educators and Their Students During a Pandemic,” Norwin School District
- “The Four Rs of Leadership,” New Story Schools
- “Train the Trainer: Trauma-informed Practices,” River Rock Academy Counseling/Social Work Department
- “Train the Trainers: Trauma-informed Approaches to Education,” University of Pittsburgh Tri-State Area School Study
- “Trauma-Informed Practices Workshop – Connections, Compassion, and Classroom Strategies: Trauma-informed Approaches to Education,” University of Pittsburgh Tri-State Area School Study
- “Understanding Mental Health and Trauma: How We Can Become Beacons of Light in the Darkness,” Extra Mile Foundation
- “Understanding Our Own Mental Health and Trauma,” Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children
- “Updates for School Safety and Security Coordinators,” Intermediate Unit 1, Coal Center, PA
- “What do Maslow and Bloom Have to do With Situational Awareness? (Hint: Everything),” Oil City School District

School Board of Directors Presentations and Executive Learning Development Sessions

- “Understanding and Supporting K12 Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management Teams: The Role of the Board of Directors,” May 2025, Kiski Area School District

Publications

- Wycoff, K., Foleno, F., Bohn, G., Tarasevich, S., Nelson, M., & Peters, S. (In Press). School-community collaborations and trauma-informed educational approaches. In H. Edl Ormiston (Ed.), Trauma-informed multi-tiered systems of support: A guide for school practitioners (pp. xx–xx). Oxford University Press.

Media Feature Interviews

- Midwestern Intermediate Unit 4, Podcast Series, “Lessons Learned: School Climate Series” (2025)
 - Climate Shift: Transforming Schools for the Future
 - Mental Health Literacy: Common Language and Understanding

- From Awareness to Action: Implementing Trauma-Informed Practices
 - Breaking the Cycle: Revisiting Bullying Prevention
 - Empowering Educators: A Whole-School Approach to Mental Health
 - From Isolation to Intervention: Helping Students with Psychosis
- Pittsburgh Parent Magazine, August 2024, “What should parents do if there is a lockdown emergency at their child’s school?”
 - Pittsburgh Parent Magazine, August 2023, “School Shootings: How can we keep children safe?”
 - ProPublica, February 8, 2025, “First Came the Warning Signs. Then a Teen Opened Fire on a Nashville School.”
 - ProPublica, May 27, 2025, “A Tennessee school expelled a 12-year-old for a social post. Experts say it didn’t properly assess if he made a threat.”
 - WTAJ News, May 2025, “Expert explains delayed reporting in Centre County school attack plan.”

Peer Reviewer

- Psychology in the Schools Journal

Advisory Board

- Violence Prevention Community Advisory Committee, Western Psychiatric Hospital and Clinic

Membership

- Association of Threat Assessment Professionals (ATAP)

Specialized Training

- Advanced Threat Assessment and Threat Management Training, Sigma Threat Management Associates
- Armed Assailant Preparedness: A.L.I.C.E., Mount Lebanon Police Department
- Basic Threat Assessment and Threat Management Training, Sigma Threat Management Associates
- Behavior Management Techniques, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic
- Citizens Police Academy, Mount Lebanon Police Department
- Clinical Homicide and Aggression Management Practices for Inpatient, Outpatient, and Nontraditional Settings, UPMC Western Behavioral Health
- Empowering Sexually Abused Children and Youth, American Psychological Association
- First Responders to Sexual Assault Crimes, U.S. Department of Justice
- Life Space Crisis Intervention Training, Life Space Crisis Intervention Institute
- Life Space Crisis Intervention Train-the-Trainer, Life Space Crisis Intervention Institute
- Nonviolent Crisis Intervention with Advanced Physical Skills Training, Crisis Prevention Institute
- Physical Management Techniques, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic
- School Response to Suicide, Crisis Training Institute, Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic
- Victim Assistance Training Program, Allegheny County Center for Victims of Violent Crime

Awards

- Outstanding Woman of The Year, Fall, 2009, California University of Pennsylvania
- Golden Apple Award for Academic, Leadership and Service Excellence, Elementary/Early Childhood Education Department, California University of Pennsylvania