

The Science and Mathematics Teacher Center is pleased to invite you to:

Strengthening Resilience: The Impact of Place-Based Education on Early Adolescent Students' Social-Emotional Development

Plan B Defense
for a

Master of Science in Natural Science Education
Concurrent Major: Environment and Natural Resources

by **Brittanie Kuhn**

Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 8:30 AM in the McWhinnie Hall Conference Room 300 and via Zoom
(if interested, please contact Brittanie at bkuhn1@uwyo.edu for Zoom link)

Abstract: Mental health issues are on the rise in early adolescent (EA) students, with concerns such as anxiety and depression increasing at alarming rates (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2021). Given that students spend a substantial portion of their formative years in educational settings, schools have begun acknowledging their critical role in students' social-emotional development (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). However, teachers often lack strategies and support to address the mental health needs of EA students. It is also unrealistic to expect teachers who already experience role overload to address such diagnoses on top of implementing the curriculum (McAllister et al., 2017). If teachers are to navigate this additional role, it is clear that they require comprehensive strategies that move beyond traditional classroom methodologies. Among these approaches, place-based education (PBE) emerges as a compelling option that enriches academic learning and catalyzes student social-emotional growth and resilience (Deringer, 2017; Smith, 2013). This mixed methods, explanatory sequential case study explores the impacts of PBE on the social-emotional resilience of EA students. Surveys and interviews revealed varying levels of resilience among students of a place-based public school. Interview themes surfaced specific aspects of PBE that may impact students' resilience. The findings suggest that while autonomy is valuable, guidance and expectations within PBE are essential to support a range of students in their resilience development within a school setting. The research underscores the importance of hands-on, collaborative, inquiry-driven PBE practices in nurturing students' growth mindsets, self-efficacy, and relational supports for fostering resilience and holistic development.

Committee Chair: Dr. Alison Mercier
Outside Member: Dr. Lindsey Nichols
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