

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Provide the following information for the Senior/key personnel and other significant contributors.
Follow this format for each person. **DO NOT EXCEED FIVE PAGES.**

NAME: Gregory J. Benner, Ph.D.

eRA COMMONS USER NAME (credential, e.g., agency login):gbenner

POSITION TITLE: Helen and Pat O'Sullivan Endowed Professor

EDUCATION/TRAINING (*Begin with baccalaureate or other initial professional education, such as nursing, include postdoctoral training and residency training if applicable. Add/delete rows as necessary.*)

INSTITUTION AND LOCATION	DEGREE (if applicable)	Completion Date MM/YYYY	FIELD OF STUDY
University of Oregon	B.S.	1998	Educational Studies & Sociology
University of Oregon	M.Ed.	1999	Special Education, Educational Policy and Management
University of Nebraska	Ph.D.	2003	Special Education—Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

A. Personal Statement

Dr. Gregory J. Benner is the Helen and Pat O'Sullivan Professor of Special Education and Implementation Science at the University of Alabama. Dr. Benner has expertise in building the capacity of educators, mental health professionals, and parents to better understand and meet the needs of youth who are least understood and struggling most. He was awarded the Wesley Becker Award for Outstanding Research for his work on the prevention of reading difficulties among students with social and emotional challenges. His co-authored book entitled, "Instructional Practices for Students with Behavioral Disorders: Strategies for Reading, Writing, and Math" is part of the What Works for Special Needs Learners Series published by Guilford Press.

B. Positions and Honors.**Positions**

2003-2007 Assistant Professor, University of Washington—Tacoma.
2007-2010 Associate Professor, University of Washington—Tacoma.
2011-2018 Professor, University of Washington—Tacoma.
2012-2018 Executive Director, UW Tacoma Center for Strong Schools
2018- Helen and Pat O'Sullivan Endowed Professor, University of Alabama

Selected Honor

2002 Wesley Becker Award for Outstanding Research, Association for Direct Instruction.
2018 President's Award for Outstanding Contributions to Implementation, Northwest PBIS Network

A. Contributions to Science**Research on Sustainable Community and School Transformation**

The cornerstone of my work over the last six years the Whole Child Initiative (WCI) community and school transformation blueprint. The WCI blueprint was developed in my first year serving as Executive Director of the Center for Strong Schools at the University of Washington in 2012. Later that year, a decade-long partnership between two urban-serving institutions, Tacoma Public Schools and the UWT Center for Strong Schools emerged to carry out the WCI blueprint. Selected results of the Tacoma Whole Child Initiative (TWCI) include:

- a. Graduation rates soared to a historical high point of 89% in the 2017 school year, which demonstrates an improvement of almost 35% compared to the initial year of implementation (55.3% in 2010-2011 school year).

- b. The overall “next institution” acceptance rate increased from 41% in 2012 to 73% in the 2016 school year with over 51% of Tacoma Schools graduates being accepted by a four-year university or degree program.
- c. The percentage of youth with healthy social emotional well-being increased 16% from 57% in spring 2015 to 73% in fall 2017.
- d. The percentage of students without suspensions and expulsions increased from 82% in the 2012-2013 school year to 91% in 2015-2016.
- e. The percentage of students without chronic absences (defined by 15.5 or more in a year) improved 10% from 86% in the 2014-2015 school year to 96% in the 2015-2016 school year.

There are four distinct implementation segments or transformative “shifts” of WCI. These shifts include: Schools (shift 1), Community Programs (shift 2), Families (shift 3) and Neighborhoods (shift 4). Through these four transformative shifts, TWCI has created an unprecedented level of stability, safety, health, and opportunity to Tacoma youth. We built community and school leadership teams to promote positive, respectful, responsible and safe behaviors across the city of Tacoma. The science of implementation and sustainable change was used to get neighborhoods, schools, and families and other community partners on the same page for Tacoma youth in an unprecedented, authentic, and grass roots manner. TWCI has been a key component to the successful fundraising campaign effort at UWT (<https://mooreink.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/UW-Tacoma-case-statement.pdf>) and continues to scale-up through the Whole Child Partnership (<https://www.gtcf.org/initiatives/whole-child-partnership/>).

The success of TWCI over the last 5 years has led to national visibility and opportunities. The Wallace Foundation, in partnership with the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and the Forum for Youth Investment (FYI), created the Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (PSELI). After nearly two years including the application process and planning grant year, Tacoma was selected as one of 6 cities nation-wide to receive social and emotional learning implementation grants. The amount of these awards will be \$2M per year over the next 4 or 5 years. More about this work here: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/how-we-work/our-work/Pages/Social-Emotional-Learning.aspx>.

Dissemination of the results of TWCI has just begun. While there have been many national and regional conference opportunities to share outcomes, much work remains to disseminate through books and refereed journal articles. Scaling-out TWCI has just begun. We will launch the Chief Leschi Schools Whole Child Initiative, a decade-long partnership with Puyallup Tribal Schools, in September 2018.

Selected Citations:

- Benner, G. J., Allen, L., Greenaway, K., Garcia, J. (2017). Sustainable system for building resilience: Preliminary outcomes of the Tacoma Whole Child Initiative. *Curriculum In Context*, 43(1), 12-16.
- Benner, G. J., Kutash, K., Nelson, J. R., & Fisher, M. B. (2013). Closing the achievement gap of students with emotional and behavioral disorders through multi-tiered systems of support. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 36(3), 15-29.
- Zeng, S., Benner, G. J., & Silva, R. (2016). Effects of a summer learning program for students at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 39(4), 593-615.

Research on Academic Interventions for Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders

As indicated by the brief summaries of funded work to date (below), my scholarly work over the last 20 years has been productive, enriching, and beneficial to regional and national efforts for improving academic services for students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders (EBD). The results of these projects have been published in *Exceptional Children*, *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, *Behavioral Disorders*, *Journal of Special Education*, *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, *Journal of Behavioral Education*, and *Education and Treatment of Children*. Dissemination of my research through publications includes over 60 peer-reviewed journal articles, one invited book, two book chapters, three non-refereed publications, and five online courses, to date. There are two peer-reviewed articles that warrant attention given their potential to improve behavioral and academic outcomes for children, adolescents, and their families. The first article entitled “The Interrelationships among Language Skills, Externalizing Behavior, and Processing Speed and their Impact on the Academic Skills of Students with

Emotional Disturbance,” is in the *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*. This paper was the culmination of a decade of professional experiences attempting to understand and improve the language and academic skills of students with EBD. I found an intriguing correlation between academic fluency and several academic and behavioral constructs. We used structural equation modeling to determine the pathways to academic functioning of students with EBD.

The second article, “The Language Skills of Children with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders: A Review of the Literature,” was also published in the *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*. This review of the literature began with an anomaly that I observed in the literature on the academic skills of students with EBD. While reviewing this literature, I found that when researchers reported descriptive statistics on their samples, deficits in language skills appeared to be more pronounced than in academic areas. My colleagues and I reviewed 26 studies spanning the last 30 years on this topic and found that nearly 90% of public school students with formally identified EBD experienced language deficits that tended to worsen over time based on norm comparisons. This review of the literature was followed by a randomized, cross-sectional investigation of the language skills of 166 students with EBD. The dissemination of the findings of this study resulted in the publication of 8 refereed journal articles and 29 national conference presentations.

While on faculty at the University of Washington Tacoma (UWT), a small branch campus of the University of Washington, I have served or am currently serving as Principal Investigator or other leadership role on 32 funded projects. The majority of these have focused on understanding and meeting the academic needs of youth with EBD. The total amount of external grant funds awarded for these projects is over \$15 million (\$15,130,302). In 2015, the US Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences funded our four-year development and innovation study (IES Goal 2) entitled *Literacy Study Group for Teachers of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* (\$1,499,444). The purpose of this project is to develop Literacy Study Group (LSG), a web-based professional development innovation designed to build the capacity of teachers to deliver high-quality reading instruction to elementary school students with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD). More about the LSG study is available here:

<https://ies.ed.gov/funding/grantsearch/details.asp?ID=1615>

My invited book entitled, *Instructional Practices for Students with Behavioral Disorders: Strategies for Reading, Writing, and Math* is part of the What Works for Special Needs Learners Series was published by Guilford Press in 2008 (reference below). I currently serve as Associate Editor for *Behavioral Disorders* and on the editorial review board for the *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* and the *Journal of Behavioral Education* among others.

Selected Citations:

- Benner, G. J., Nelson, J. R., & Epstein, M. H. (2002). The language skills of children with emotional and behavioral disorders: A review of the literature. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 10(1), 43-59.
- Benner, G. J., Nelson, J. R., Allor, J. H., Mooney, P., & Dai, T. (2008). Academic processing speed mediates the influence of both externalizing behavior and language skills on the academic skills of students with emotional disturbance. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 17(1), 63-78.
- Nelson, J. R., Benner, G. J., & Mooney, P. (2008). *Instructional practices for students with behavioral disorders: Strategies for reading, writing, and math*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Benner, G. J., Mattison, R. E., Nelson, J. R., & Ralston, N. C. (2009). Types of language disorders in students classified ED: Prevalence and association with learning disabilities and psychopathology. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 32(4), 631-653.
- Benner, G. J., & Nelson, J. R. (2014). Emotional disturbance and communication. In L. Cummings (Ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Communication Disorders* (pp. 125-140). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Research on Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs and Interventions for Youth with EBD

Ten of my projects have centered on understanding and meeting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of students with EBD. The first funded project was, *Understanding the Influence of Language on Behavior*, funded by a UWT Founders Endowment in April of 2004. The focus of this project was to examine the interrelationships between language skills, IQ, processing speed, social adjustment and academic skills of

students with EBD. The main finding from this project was that deficits in cognitive processing speed were more prevalent and more pronounced than academic, behavioral, or language skill domains. The second project was *Building the Capacity of Special Educators to Use Positive Behavioral Supports* (PBS), funded by the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) using flow through funds from the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). The purpose of this project was to build the capacity of special educators, particularly teachers of students with EBD in self-contained placements, to apply positive behavioral interventions and supports. Teachers of students with EBD in self-contained settings reported statistically significant gains in their ability to apply positive behavioral interventions and supports including progress monitoring, self-monitoring, and using alternative methods to prevent defiance. The third project was *Implementing School-wide PBS in the South Puget Sound Region* funded by OSPI using funds from OSERS. The purpose of this project was twofold: 1) implement school-wide positive behavioral supports in a large urban school district; and 2) continue building the capacity of teachers of students with EBD in urban self-contained settings. Outcomes included significant gains in social adjustment, school safety, and academic achievement and reductions in administrative discipline contacts, antisocial behaviors, and teacher stress. Finally, the US Department of Education Institute of Education Sciences funded my three-year study entitled *An Efficacy Study of the Think Time Strategy for Schools* (R324A07183). Results of this efficacy study include three peer-reviewed publications in *Exceptional Children*, *Behavioral Disorders*, and *Education and Treatment of Children*.

Selected Citations:

- Benner, G. J., Beaudoin, K. M., Chen, P. Y., Davis, C., & Ralston, N. C. (2010). The impact of intensive positive behavioral supports on the behavioral functioning of students with emotional disturbance: How much does fidelity matter?" *Journal of Behavioral Assessment and Interventions for Children*, 1(1), 85-100.
- Benner, G. J., Nelson, J. R., Ralston, N. C., & Sanders, E. A. (2012). Efficacy of a primary level standard protocol behavior intervention for students with externalizing behavior problems. *Exceptional Children*, 78(2), 181-198.
- Benner, G. J., Sanders, E. A. Nelson, J. R., & Ralston, N. C. (2013). How individual and school aggregate baseline behavior levels moderate response to a primary level behavior intervention. *Behavioral Disorders*, 38(2), 73-87.
- Nelson, J. R., Benner, G. J., & Bohaty, J. (2014). Addressing the academic problems and challenges of students with emotional and behavioral disorders. In H. M. Walker and F. M. Gresham (Eds.), *Handbook of Evidence-Based Practices for Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* (pp. 363-377). New York: Guilford Press.

B. Research Support

Ongoing Support

April, 2015 US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences
Literacy Study Group for Teachers of Students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders
Principal Investigator

Completed Support

July, 2017 Wallace Foundation Implementation Grant
Tacoma Social Emotional Learning Initiative (TSELI): An Initiative to Promote Social and Emotional Learning in School and Out-of-School Settings
Core Team Leader & Principal Investigator

January, 2017 Wallace Foundation Planning Grant
Tacoma Whole Child Initiative: An Initiative to Promote Social and Emotional Learning in School and Out-of-School Settings
Principal Investigator, Core Team

July, 2013 Tacoma Public Schools
Tacoma Whole Child Initiative
Principal Investigator

October, 2012 Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Strengthening Education in Juvenile Detention Centers
Principal Investigator

April, 2012 US Department of Education, OELA

Communities of Practice for Teaching English Language Learners (TELL)
Co-Principal Investigator

September, 2011 Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
OSPI/UWT Data Dashboard Project—Phase 3
Principal Investigator

June, 2010 Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
OSPI/UWT Data Dashboard Project
Principal Investigator

May, 2009 Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board
 —U.S. Department of Education Title II Part A
Math 360: Adding academic language to content knowledge in mathematics
Principal Investigator

March, 2007 US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences
An Efficacy Study of the Think Time Strategy for Schools
Principal Investigator

July, 2006 Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board
 —U.S. Department of Education Title II Part A
Project TIER: Targeting Instructional Effectiveness in Reading
Principal Investigator

July, 2005 Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board
 —U.S. Department of Education Title II Part A
*Reading Intervention Summit: A Literacy Learning
 Continuum for Special Education and Title 1 Teachers*
Principal Investigator

February, 2005 Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board
 —U.S. Department of Education Title II Part A
*Project BERS: Building the Essential Reading Skills (BERS)
 of North Central Washington Middle and High School Students*
Principal Investigator

Philanthropic Investors:

Bamford Foundation
 Howard and Lynn Behar
 Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation
 Totem Ocean Trailer Express
 Judy and Allan Trinkwald
 Wallace Foundation