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## New Senior Program Specialist for Alliance Brings a Diversity of Experience, Organizational Skills and Enthusiasm

Sara Morales is a native of Puerto Rico where she received her foundational skills in a rural setting and was an English Language Learner (ELL) for part of her schooling in the United States. Because of her upbringing, she is passionate about supporting under-served populations in education and ensuring that all students have access to rich learning environments. She holds a Bachelor's degree from Florida International University and a Master's degree from New Mexico State University. Prior to her work at New Mexico State University she held various positions including teaching, coaching, tutoring and counseling in public schools in the Hawaii Department of Education, the Department of Education in Florida and New Mexico Public Education Department.

During the last five years she has been a part of the research team for two National Science Foundation funded grants at NMSU. Currently a math specialist and researcher with the Institute for Excellence in Math and Science Education (IEMSE), she is focused on k-12 mathematics instruction and is experienced in data collection, analysis, dissemination, professional development and partnership collaboration in multiple districts across southern New Mexico. She also assists

the team in publications, writings and has become an expert in observing and assessing mathematics lessons. Her latest contribution, Opportunities for Learning Mathematics: A workbook for Mathematics Educators Aligned to the Common Core State Standards can be accessed in the Mathematics Science Partnership (MSP) hub website. Her other work includes local, state wide and national presentations about current research findings in the field of mathematics education and leadership.

As the Alliance Program Specialist, her primary role is to coordinate outreach and extension initiatives in the College of Education, and to oversee a variety of projects related to P-20 initiatives in the southern part of New Mexico, particularly focusing on border and rural schools.



**Sara Morales, M.A.,** is passionate about the success of all students and looks forward to collaborating efforts between the Alliance and its partnerships with school districts and community agencies, which promote student achievement and community initiatives.  
smorales@nmsu.edu

## Meet The Staff



### Administrative Assistant

*Odilia Garcia is currently pursuing a degree in Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education and is involved in Project MOVEMOS (Moving Elementary Methods On-Site). Through this project, she is gaining experience on theory, research and methodology instruction and reflection, as well as having interactions with students in a first grade classroom. For the past four years, she has worked through many of the outreach and extension projects that the Alliance supports.*



### Student Employee

*Jeremy Telles, has an associate degree in the area of Digital Graphics. Jeremy has worked with several designers and companies in the Las Cruces area and has completed several projects as a freelance photographer and designer. Jeremy is currently completing a Bachelor's degree in Art, with an emphasis on Graphic Design. He assists with outreach and extension projects, via print and web media, focusing in particular on graphics and design.*

## The Changing Nature of Education: Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association

Sponsored by Dr. Oakley Hadfield and Dr. Dana Christman

New Mexico State University proudly hosted the annual conference of the Rocky Mountain Educational Research Association (RMERA) on November 2nd and 3rd. This conference provided an opportunity for new faculty and graduate students to present their research, and presented a forum for all researchers to share their work. Doctoral students also competed for a scholarship to present at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference in San Francisco, California, in April 2013. Amneh Al-Rawashdeh was awarded this scholarship for her presentation titled, *Muslimat Junior Faculty: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of Navigating the Tenure Process in Research Universities*. Proceedings included topics on Instruction, Higher Education, Social Justice, Professional Development and Leadership. Participants at this conference also experienced a taste of our culture by visiting Old Mesilla and participating in El Día de los Muertos activities. For a complete history of RMERA and to view proceedings of the conference visit: <http://rmera.net/>.



*Amneh Al-Rawashdeh  
RMERA Scholarship  
recipient for the  
AERA conference.*

# Increasing Students' Mathematical Understanding through Math Snacks

Drs. Karen Trujillo, Karin Wiburg, Barbara Chamberlin and Ted Stanford

Math Snacks is a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded grant in which NMSU researchers and game designers collaborated to design educational tools, computer animations and mini-games along with the refinement of educational objectives to bring media technology into the classrooms. Math Snacks are not designed to replace instruction, but supplement it by making math more accessible in a way that engages middle school students

These “snacks” help students in grades five through eight better understand the concepts of ratio, proportion, number line, scale factor, fractions, number line and place value. The concepts addressed by Math Snacks animations and games were identified using the results of more than 24,000 standards-based assessments in five diverse school districts. After identifying these gaps, classrooms were observed and students and teachers were interviewed to answer why these test items were misunderstood. Mathematicians, math educators and technology experts then aligned these gaps to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and established Math Snacks Learning Objectives.

The study suggests that the use of animation alone does not necessarily lead to increased student understanding of concepts. The pilot study confirms current national research that the teacher plays a vital role when determining the effectiveness of technology-enhanced lessons on student learning. Research also proves that teaching students conceptually, rather than memorizing an algorithm, leads students to deeper understanding of the content. Researchers continue to pilot investigations to compare classrooms where the concepts are taught through traditional means and will continue to study pre and post assessments to determine the effectiveness of Math Snacks in the classroom and its impact on student achievement.

For more information about Math Snacks, please visit [www.mathsnacks.com](http://www.mathsnacks.com)



*“The study suggests that the use of animation in conjunction with effective written work and activities, whether or not teachers use scripted lessons, leads to increased student understanding of ratio and number line concepts,”*  
-Karen Trujillo

# New Mexico Students Are First In Math

Barbara Asteak

More than twenty-five thousand students across the state are participating in the web-based First In Math® Online Program. Targeted to K-8th grade students, First In Math is a supplement to curriculum that provides serious “Deep Practice” in a fun, game-based format. Cumulatively, New Mexico students have solved more than 41 million math problems on the First In Math website so far this school year.

“We were introduced to the program through NMSU several years ago and have seen continuous improvement in math fluency. Our kids are enjoying playing the games and learning the love of mathematics,” explains Dr. Jann Hunter, Director of Curriculum and Development, Alamogordo Public Schools.

In addition to content ranging from one-step addition to multi-step algebra, the website provides assessment and interactive Common Core alignment tools for teachers. The program also includes a friendly competition at the school, district, state and national levels.

Alamogordo’s Oregon Elementary School is ranked the #1 school in the state and is also home to the top three classroom teams in the state out of 1,900 teams. Teacher Karl Gonzales’ team “racer58nm” is currently the #12 fifth-grade team in the nation.



Gadsden Public Schools is implementing a district-wide K-8 pilot this year. “Last year we piloted the program in our middle schools and had great success with some of our students becoming top ten First In Math students in the state. We’ve never experienced anything quite like this before,” says George Manriquez, District Math Instructional Specialist, Gadsden Independent Schools. “When given the opportunity to expand the program to a K-8 pilot we jumped at it. So far this year our students have solved more than 12.5

million math problems—an average of 1,400 problems per student.”

*Alliance members wishing to learn about implementing a First In Math pilot can contact Barbara Asteak, V.P. of Suntex International (creator of the program) at [barbara@firstinmath.com](mailto:barbara@firstinmath.com) or 800-242-4542.*

# Funding Opportunity for Bilingual Education for Educational Assistants, Pre-Service Teachers and Classroom Teachers

Directed By Dr. Anita Hernandez

The College of Education is now offering financial assistance to educational assistants and pre-service teachers wishing to complete their degree and teaching certification at New Mexico State University. The program also offers financial assistance to practitioners wishing to obtain a M.A. degree for teaching Bilingual and English Language Learners. These programs are designed to work with language and literacy development and bilingual education models. Through this process, participants will become part of a community of teachers interested in furthering their understanding about bilingualism/biliteracy as well as improving instruction for Bilingual and English Language Learners. Teachers and pre-service teachers will collaborate through on-line, face to face weekend sessions and summer institutes.



For more information, contact Dr. Anita Hernandez at (575) 646-3521.

## Good News

### The New Mexico State University Library

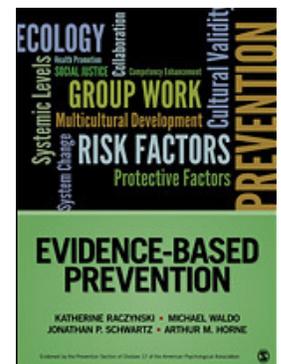
Several collections have been digitized. The Library joins hundreds of libraries, archives and museums that have launched projects to place collections on the Web. Visit the Library's Digital Collections website at <http://lib.nmsu.edu/digitalcollections.shtml>. The site currently provides access to six collections of documents and/or photographs, and a number of other important collections are in various stages of processing.

<http://lib.nmsu.edu/sites/libnews/library-holds-student-essay-contest-for-sunshine-week/>

<http://lib.nmsu.edu/sites/libnews/nmsu-library-announces-digital-collections-2/>

### Counseling and Educational Psychology Department

Dr. Jonathan Schwartz and Dr. Michael Waldo from the Counseling & Educational Psychology Department at NMSU recently published a book with their colleagues from the University of Georgia. The topic of this book is on evidence based prevention. The book examines research criteria for evaluating preventive interventions, including prevention in schools. The book is available from Sage: Raczynski, K., Waldo, M., Schwartz, J. & Horne, A. (2013). Evidence-based prevention. Singapore: Sage.



## Community Interest

Announcing a new after school program

Dr. Nancy Bates

There's a new After School Program in town! Gym Magic is offering an exciting new program for students from kindergarten through fifth grade. This unique program offers a wide array of fun activities (all under one roof) combined with educational support for the students. Just imagine, kids having fun doing the things they naturally love to do (move, move, move) PLUS activities which prepare their brains for higher learning (S'cool Moves)! Each day has an hour of engaging physical activity (gymnastics, swimming, cheer or games), thirty minutes of integrative movement to promote ease of learning and brain organization followed by sixty minutes of classroom activities (literacy, math, homework and games). Social skills are enhanced; physical skills are developed; and learning is experienced as FUN!

The Director and Educational Coordinator is Sandra Graham, MS. She can be reached 575.496.7466.



*For additional information, call 523-1616 or visit: <http://www.gymmagic.com/education/after-school-program/>*

## Upcoming Events

- 4th Annual Donn & Sarrah Kidd Literacy Conference – March 2, 2013

This conference will provide K-12 educators and parents with resources and research needed to enhance literacy for all students. Please visit <http://education.nmsu.edu/projects/kidd/index.html> for more information or register at <http://www.rsvpbook.com/2013kiddliteracyconference>.

- Superintendent's Conference – TBA

We are currently working with superintendents to do a needs assessment for our partner districts. Superintendents will have an opportunity to discuss successes and areas of concerns in their districts and collaborate on possible solutions, and share about research and resources.

## Farewell to Dr. Ramon Dominguez

The Alliance staff wants to wish Dr. Ramon Dominguez the very best as he assumes a new assignment at New Mexico State University. Dr. Dominguez has been integral to the growth and success of the Alliance. We will continue to seek his leadership and professionalism as needed.

Dr. Dominguez you will be greatly missed!



Collaboration • Partnership • Networking • Outreach • Research