



Washington State University

College of Education, Sport and Human Sciences

April Westermann

Will defend the dissertation on

Date: December 2, 2025

Time: 9:00 A.M.

Zoom: Link by request ceshs.gradstudies@wsu.edu

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend

Title:

EXPLORING LEADERSHIP IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND NEEDS

Chair: Shannon Calderone

Abstract:

This study seeks to explore early care and education professionals' (ECEPs') leadership pathways, including how ECEPs have learned to lead, the experiences that have affected their leadership direction, their motivation for leadership, and how equity plays a role in their leadership development and application. The proposed research questions seek to reveal how participants have generated their knowledge of, understanding about, and application of early care and education (ECE) leadership characteristics and practices. Research participants' experiences are individual and subjective, and participants make meaning of their experiences through interactions with the researcher. Through these interactions, those involved in the study cocreate understanding, which lends well to a qualitative study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Burkholder et al., 2020). Real-life phenomena within participant experiences, such as how they have engaged in leadership roles within the organizations in which they have worked, affect the motivation, leadership development, and application of leadership principles for these individuals. This study will include a discussion of how ECEPs have gained and used leadership skills and the knowledge needed to engage in their leadership role to inform policy and practice.