

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Doctor of Philosophy, Education, May 2016

Concentration: Educational Psychology: Applied Developmental Science

Dissertation Title: Trust principles for principals: Building relational trust with teachers through the interpersonal and task-oriented dimensions of leadership (*stable URL*:

<http://libra.virginia.edu/catalog/libra-oa:10978>)

Charlottesville, VA

2012-2016

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

Bachelor of Arts, Summa cum Laude, Child Development, May 2008

Medford, MA

2004-2008

AWARDS, HONORS, & SCHOLARSHIPS

Outstanding Doctoral Student Award	2016
Virginia Education Science Training (VEST) Pre-doctoral Fellowship, University of Virginia	2012-2016
Robert Lynn Canady Fellowship	2015
Alex Elias Memorial Prize Scholarship Award, Tufts University	2008
NESCAC Team Sportsmanship Award, Tufts University	2008
Scholar-Athlete Award, Tufts University	2007, 2008
Dean's List, College of Arts & Sciences, Tufts University	2004 -2008

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

CENTER FOR CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

Senior Innovation Solutions Associate, RINCC

Senior Evaluation Faculty/ Research Scientist, Societal Impact

Evaluation Faculty/Research Scientist, Insights and Impact Group

Postdoctoral Fellow

Greensboro, NC

June 2025 - present

September 2019-June 2025

May 2017-September 2019

July 2016-May 2017

- Led experimentation with AI and prototyping of copilot agents to streamline internal processes and solve operational challenges.
- Automated CCL's End of Program reports using R, enabling scalable, consistent reporting across all programs.
- Created and launched several online courses tailored for leaders in education, expanding CCL's digital learning offerings.
- Applied innovation tools and frameworks to support early-stage concept development and cross-functional experimentation.
- Led and managed multiple internal and client-facing research and evaluation projects simultaneously, which included developing evaluation plans, collaborating with clients to create theories of change and logic models, and executing mixed methods data collection, analysis, and reporting efficiently and effectively.
- Spearheaded a cross-functional team in a comprehensive 5-year research project aimed at understanding student leadership. This collaborative initiative resulted in the creation and validation of the Student Leadership Scale (utilized by over 15,000 students to date), the formation of CCL's Social-Emotional Leadership Framework, the development of the Leadership Indicator for Students (a tool to support schools in evaluating and improving student leadership programming), and two books (one targeting educators and another for children).
- Ensured evaluation, impact assessment, and other insights were appropriately disseminated through various channels, contributing to CCL's research priorities and strategic direction.
- Scaled evaluation solutions by writing code (in R) to automate reporting for a number of different types of surveys, and supported colleagues in learning how to access and use these reporting

tools.

- Mentored junior team members, supervised interns, and served as a mentor in CCL's mentorship program pilot.
- Contributed to the work of the development team by writing responses to RFPs, supporting the evaluation and research pieces of proposals, participating in client meetings, and writing copy for marketing case studies.

CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Charlottesville, VA

IES Graduate Research Fellow, Social Development Lab

2012-2016

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sara Rimm-Kaufman

- Managed teams of 4-5 undergraduate and graduate researchers, overseeing participant recruitment, data collection/analysis, and the dissemination of results.
- Led a research team in collaborating with district leaders to improve instructional rigor in two public school districts using data-driven results.
- Conducted evaluations of K-12 social-emotional learning (SEL) program implementation and outcomes, and developed and delivered professional development for over 50 teachers to enhance SEL integration based on research findings.

CHILDHOOD LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Charlottesville, VA

Teaching Assistant, University of Virginia

Fall 2014

- Collaborated with a professor to create the course syllabus and assessments
- Planned and taught several classes on brain development and on teacher evaluation
- Worked with struggling college students to enhance their writing skills

MOSES BROWN SCHOOL

Providence, RI

2ND Grade Teacher

2011-2012

- Utilized the school's Quaker values to teach social justice and self-motivation, while implementing the Responsive Classroom approach

TEACH FOR AMERICA

Tulsa, OK

Curriculum Consultant

2012

- Wrote the 4th and 5th grade Math Curriculum for the ISAT, used to train incoming Teach for America Corps Members (This included assessments, unit plans, and a week's worth of model lesson plans)
- Collaborated with other ISAT writers to revise this curriculum and create 2nd and final drafts

COLERAIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Colerain, NC

Teach for America Corps Member

2009-2011

5th Grade Teacher, Department Co-chair

2010-2011

4th Grade Teacher

2009-2010

- Lead professional learning community (PLC) for math for 4th through 5th grades
- Led 4th grade students to achieve an 80% pass rate on the Reading End-Of-Grade Exams (EOGs) and a 95% pass rate on the Math EOGs, nearly doubling the predicted pass rates of 43% in Reading, and tripling the predicted pass rate of 27% in Math
- Led 5th grade students to achieve a 76% pass rate on the Reading EOGs and an 89% pass rate on the Math EOGs, over 20 percentage points higher than the pass rate for similar schools in the district

BOOKS

Reinecke, S. & **Leis, M.** (2022). *Building Bridges: Leadership for You and Me*. Center for Creative Leadership.

Leis, M. & Reinecke, S. (2020). *Social-Emotional Leadership: A Guide for Youth Development*. Center for Creative Leadership.

BLOGS

Leis, M. (2024). Unlocking Potential in Leadership Development Training: The Importance of Reframing. CCLInnovation.org. <https://cclinnovation.org/news-posts/unlocking-potential-in-leadership-development-training-the-importance-of-reframing/>

Leis, M. (2021). Principal leadership development influences principal “churn”. CCLInnovation.org. <https://cclinnovation.org/news-posts/principal-leadership-development-influences-principal-churn/>

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Leis, M., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Paxton, C. L. C., & Sandilos, L. (2017). Leading Together: Strengthening Relational Trust in the Adult School Community. *Journal of School Leadership*, 27.6, 841-869.

Leis, M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (2016). Principal actions related to increases in teacher-principal trust: Comparative case studies. *Journal of School of Public Relations*, 36, 33-64.

Merritt, E. G., Palacios, N. A., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Banse, H. W., & **Leis, M.** (2016). Teaching practices in fifth grade mathematics classrooms with high-achieving English Learner students. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 0, 1-15.

Leis, M., Schmidt, K. M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (2015). Using the Partial Credit Model to evaluate the Student Engagement in Mathematics Scale. *Journal of Applied Measurement*, 16, 251-267.

Paxton, C. L. C., **Leis, M.**, & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (2014). Collective efficacy and the school adult community: Results after two years of implementing Leading Together. *Society for Research in Educational Effectiveness*. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED562716>

TECHNICAL MANUALS

Leis, M., Leisman, T., Kosovich, J., and Ehrlich, V. (2018). *Leadership Indicator for Students (LIS) Technical Manual*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

SELECT TECHNICAL REPORTS AND WHITE PAPERS

DePass, M., Ehrlich, V., & **Leis, M.** (2019). Accelerating School Success: Transforming K-12 Schools by Investing in Leadership Development. Whitepaper. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

- Leis, M.,** Hamill, J., Leisman, T., Barefoot, M. J., Conner, C., Davis, K. M., Gatti, B., Hayes, K., & Johnson, T. (2018). Golden LEAF Scholars Leadership Program: *Lessons of Experience* from Rural Leaders in North Carolina. Whitepaper. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M.** (May 2018). Bishop McGuinness Baseline Report: Spring 2018. Report prepared for the leadership team at Bishop McGuinness High School. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M.** (March 2018). Young Women Leadership Institute: Girl Scouts. Impact report prepared for the Charlotte Hornets' Nest Council. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M.,** Yarborough, P., Reinecke, S., Leisman, T., Kosovich, J., and Ehrlich, V. (2018). *Leadership Indicator for Students (LIS)*. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M.,** Kosovich, J., Leisman, T., and Ehrlich, V. (Oct 2017). The Golden LEAF Scholars Leadership Program Impact Report: Program Year 2016-2017. Evaluation report prepared for the Golden LEAF Foundation. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M. & Yarborough, P.** (November 2017). Charlotte Latin School: Pilot Leadership Programs, 2016-2017 School Year. Evaluation Report prepared for Charlotte Latin School. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M. & Yarborough, P.** (November 2017). Charlotte Latin School: Developmental Changes in Views of Leadership, 2016-2017 School Year. Evaluation Report prepared for Charlotte Latin School. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Ehrlich, V., **Leis, M.,** Kosovich, J., Leisman, T., & Kofford, L. (Aug 2017). The Ravenscroft School *Lead From Here* Program Annual Report: Program year 2016-2017. Evaluation report prepared for Ravenscroft School. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M. & Yarborough, P.** (April 2017). View of Leadership at Charlotte Latin School: Findings from Baseline Survey. Evaluation Report prepared for Charlotte Latin School. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M.,** Cullen-Lester, K. L., & Stawiski, S. (Feb 2017). HPNC Leadership Program Beaufort County Evaluation Report prepared for Kate B. Reynolds. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M.,** Cullen-Lester, K. L., & Stawiski, S. (Dec 2016). HPNC Leadership Program Nash-Edgecombe Counties Cohort 2 Evaluation Report prepared for Kate B. Reynolds. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.
- Leis, M.,** Cullen-Lester, K. L., & Stawiski, S. (Nov 2016). HPNC Leadership Program Nash-Edgecombe Counties Cohort 1 Evaluation Report prepared for Kate B. Reynolds. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

Ehrlich, V., Stawiski, S., **Leis, M.** (Oct 2016). The Golden LEAF Scholars Leadership Program Impact Report Program Year 2015-2016 prepared for the Golden LEAF Foundation. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., **Leis, M.**, & Paxton, C. (2014). Innovating together to improve the adult community in schools: Results from a two-year study of the initial implementation of Leading Together. Research report for Center for Courage & Renewal published online:
http://www.couragerenewal.org/PDFs/UVA_LeadingTogether_July_11_2014_Final_Full_Report.pdf

MANUSCRIPTS IN PROGRESS

Leis, M. (*in progress*). The eight dimensions of teacher working conditions: CFA validation in the MET sample. *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*.

Leis, M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (*in progress*). The role of teacher working conditions for building teacher-principal relational trust. *Journal of School Leadership*.

PRESENTATIONS

Leis, M., Cameron, G., Reinecke, S., & Leisman, T. (2019, April). *Leveraging Leadership Preparation Development for School Change*. Paper presented at the American Education Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference, Toronto, Canada.

Leis, M. (2019, January). *The Leadership Indicator for Students*. Presentation through CCL Labs, Center for Creative Leadership, Greensboro, NC. Recording link:
<https://meetccl.webex.com/meetccl/ldr.php?RCID=0230ab08787dc6278ff63bdc8120b6df>

Yarborough, P., **Leis, M.**, & Brock, A. (2019, February). *Why guess if you don't have to? Measuring student leadership in K-12 settings*. Workshop presented at the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Annual Conference, Long Beach, CA.

DePass, M., **Leis, M.**, & Cole, A. (2018, November). *Where's the Beef? – A Journey into Measuring the Impact of Using Leadership Development to Leverage School Improvement Efforts*. Presentation at Prince George's County Greater Impact II Conference. College Park, Maryland.

Leis, M. (2018, July). *The Leadership Indicator for Students (LIS)*. Presentation at the Silver Bay Leadership Forum Conference. Silver Bay, NY.

Leis, M., Leisman, T., Ehrlich, V., Kosovich, J. J. (2018, March). *Understanding and Measuring Leadership from a Student Perspective: Creation and Validation of the Student Leadership Scale (SLS)*. Poster presented at the meeting of the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, Washington, DC.

Ehrlich, V., & **Leis, M.** (2017, November). *Building teacher networks: How social network analysis is informing the evaluation of professional development for teachers*. TIG Multipaper Session

presented at the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), Washington, DC.

Hannum, K., Reinelt, C., Ehrlich, V., **Leis, M.**, & Meehan, D. (2017, November). *Strategies for Connecting Values to the Evaluation of Leadership Development Efforts in Foundations*. Roundtable presented at the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association (AEA), Washington, DC.

Leis, M. & Hamill, J. (2017, March). Lessons of Experience from Rural North Carolina: A Participatory Action Research Model. Individual Presentation at the 2017 Gulf-South Summit, Greensboro, NC. <http://www.leadbeyond.org/ccl-represented-2017-gulf-south-summit-golden-leaf-lessons-experience/>

Leis, M. (2017, February). Social Networks in Schools Workshop. Workshop given at the School of Education at UNCG: Greensboro, NC.

Leis, M. & Ehrlich, V. (2017, February). Understanding Change in Schools: A Social Network Approach. Presentation to the School of Education at UNCG: Greensboro, NC.

Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Sandilos, L., **Leis, M.** (2017, September). *"Using Data as a Way of Listening": Strategies and Outcomes from a Rural Research Practice Partnership Designed to Produce School Improvement*. Paper presented at the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE) Fall Conference, Washington, DC.

Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., Sandilos, L., **Leis, M.**, Garcia, D., & Donnan, M. F. (2016, August). *A Partnered Approach to Using Data to Improve Rigor and Relationships in Rural Schools*. Paper presented at the American Psychological Association (APA) Annual Conference, Denver, CO.

Leis, M. (2016, April). *The Role of Teacher Working Conditions for Building Teacher-Principal Relational Trust*. Poster presented at the American Education Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference Graduate Student Poster Session, Washington, DC.

Leis, M. (2015, June). *Critical Ingredients for SEL-Program Implementation*. Workshop presented at Alignment Nashville's Social Emotional Learning Conference 2015: Grow, Achieve, Empower through SEL, Nashville, TN.

Leis, M., Schmidt, K. M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (2015, March). *Using the Partial Credit Model to Evaluate the Student Engagement in Mathematics Scale*. Poster presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), Philadelphia, PA.

Leis, M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (2015, March). *Improving Professional Community in Schools: Report of the Two-year Leading Together Intervention*. Paper presented at the Curry Research Conference (CRC), Charlottesville, VA.

Leis, M., Paxton, C. L. C., Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (2014, April). *Introducing and Implementing Leading Together: A New Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Program for Teachers and School Administrators*. Paper presented at the American Education Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

Leis, M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E. (2014, February). *Principal Actions that Build Teacher Trust: Comparative Case Studies*. Paper presented at the Curry Research Conference (CRC), Charlottesville, VA.

Paxton, C. L. C., **Leis, M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E.** (2014, September). *Collective Efficacy and Adult Community: Teacher and Principal Perceptions After Two Years of Implementing Leading Together in Schools*. Paper presented at the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness (SREE) Fall Conference, Washington, DC.

Paxton, C. L. C., **Leis, M., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. E.** (2014, April). *Principal and Teacher Collective Efficacy Beliefs and the Leading Together Professional Development Program*. Paper presented at the American Education Research Association (AERA) Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

ANALYTIC SOFTWARE EXPERIENCE

R, SPSS, STATA, Dedoose, Mplus, NodeXL, Winsteps

SERVICE

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE MEMBER, for Chris Rehm, James Madison University, dissertation title: Leader Self-efficacy in youth leader development

JOURNAL REVIEWER, Early Childhood Research Quarterly, Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology

CONFERENCE PROPOSAL REVIEWER, Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness

COMMITTEE MEMBER, Curry School of Education Student Travel Committee

WORKSHOP INSTRUCTOR, 3-Minute Thesis Competition, Statistics (for undergraduates attending the Summer Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) at the University of Virginia)

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

American Educational Research Association, American Evaluation Association

SELECT VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

BIG BROTHERS, BIG SISTERS OF CENTRAL BLUE RIDGE Charlottesville, VA
Big Sister 2014 – present

- Mentored and developed a relationship with a pre-teen by offering consistency, encouragement, and role modeling

CORAZONES CONTENTAS Granada, Nicaragua
Volunteer 01/2009 – 05/2009

- Worked closely with five other teachers to plan curriculum and a daily schedule in preparation for creating a school in Granada for students with special needs
- After the school was opened, worked with small groups of students with special needs to advance their math and reading skills

MONT BERKELEY INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL San Jose, Costa Rica
English Language Teacher 07/2008 – 12/2008

- Created and implemented syllabuses for English Reading and Language courses for students in grades 7-11

- Gained experience in teaching ESL students.