

# DR. CARA D. WILLIAMS

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## PERSONAL STATEMENT

As an educator, inclusion consultant, and researcher for over two decades, I have dedicated my career to supporting families of children with Special Educational Needs, while guiding schools and government entities toward stronger, more equitable practices. I blend hands-on support for families with system-level expertise, including contributing to major neurodiversity initiatives in the UAE. Across all roles – teaching, consulting, research, and policy – I remain committed to helping learners thrive by ensuring families and educational systems have the knowledge, tools, and confidence to provide inclusive support.

## SKILLS

- Curriculum Development and Course Design
- Instructional and Learning Strategies
- Inclusive Education and Special Education
- Educational Psychology Assessments
- Teacher Training and Mentorship
- Program Coordination and Administration
- Research and Data Analysis
- Academic Advising
- Community Engagement
- Cross-Cultural Communication
- Technology Integration in Education
- IEP and Special Education Documentation

## EDUCATION

2014	Ph.D.	Texas A & M University, College Station Educational Psychology
2012	M.Ed.	Texas A & M University, College Station
2007	B.A.	Special Education University of Nevada, Las Vegas Special Education

## MAJOR FIELDS OF RESEARCH INTEREST

My research interests include teaching strategies, especially game-based learning, universal design, differentiated instruction, and inclusive techniques, mathematics education, and at-risk populations. I prefer to use qualitative and mixed methods approaches.

## **TEACHING CERTIFICATIONS**

Special Education EC-12: Texas

Mathematics Grades 4-8: Texas

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

### **Educational Psychologist/Consultant and Learning Coach**

Enlighten Lounge Learning Center – Founder, United Arab Emirates

January 2022 – Present

### **LEARNING CENTER ROLES**

- Conduct comprehensive assessments of learners' skill levels in reading, mathematics, and writing, as well as IQ and academic achievement evaluations
- Developed and implement individualized teaching and learning strategies for diverse learners
- Modify curriculum based on individual needs
- Create and update Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)
- Support students with dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, intellectual impairments, ADHD, and Autism
- Incorporate game-based learning to enhance engagement and understanding for students with varied learning needs
- Manage day-to-day operations of the center, overseeing program delivery
- Train academic coaches to provide specialized support for learners

### **CONSULTANCY PROJECTS**

Senior Consultant – Neurodiversity & Inclusion Education

-Abu Dhabi Executive Office (ADEO)

Served as a senior consultant and advisor to the Abu Dhabi Executive Office on the design, evaluation, and commercialization of a UAE-wide neurodiversity initiative. Led research, benchmarking, systems design, and policy guidance to strengthen early identification, inclusive practice, and service provision across K-12 settings.

#### Key Contributions

- Conducted a comprehensive landscape analysis of neurodiversity and inclusion services across private schools, identifying strengths, system gaps, and priority areas for reform.
- Designed a multi-tiered benchmarking framework and heat-map scoring tool to assess school readiness, ILP/IEP quality, MTSS structures, and inclusive classroom practices
- Benchmarked UAE practices against international exemplars (US, UK, Singapore, Australia) and synthesized research into actionable system-level recommendations.
- Facilitated high-level consultations with school leaders, government stakeholders, and community partners to inform policy development and operational design.
- Produced policy briefs, strategic reports, and implementation plans used by senior ADEO leadership for next-phase decision making.

- Ensured alignment of proposed models with ADEK/KHDA regulations, national education priorities, and global evidence-based standards.

### **Assistant Professor**

Sharjah Education Academy, United Arab Emirates

August 2022 – December 2025

- Supervising master's students within the Teacher Leadership program, offering mentorship and guidance on academic and practical applications.
- Instructing pre-service and in-service teachers through a hybrid teaching model, focusing on teacher training and effective instructional practices.
- Developing and designing coursework for the Post-Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), integrating research-based strategies to support educator development.
- Conducting research and presenting findings at conferences, contributing to the field's knowledge base and sharing best practices.
- Supervising students' academic progress and social development, providing academic advising to support their educational journey.
- Serving on various councils and committees, collaborating on institutional projects and policy development.
  - Advancing Arabic-Language Resources for Special Educational Needs, Disabilities, and Giftedness
  - Leadership to Support Inclusion and High Expectations for All Students
  - Research Ethics Committee
- Engaging in community service initiatives, fostering connections between the academy and local educational communities.

### **Mainstream and Inclusion Senior Specialist**

Abu Dhabi Department of Knowledge (ADEK) – United Arab Emirates

August 2021 – November 2021

- Provided training to school stakeholders on evidence-based inclusive education practices
- Developed and implemented inclusion policies, frameworks, and guidebooks for school stakeholders
- Managed procurement requests to support inclusive education initiatives
- Conducted school inspections to find areas for professional development and recommend improvement

### **Assistant Professor – Counseling, Special Education, and Neuroscience Division**

Emirates College for Advanced Education, United Arab Emirates

August 2015 – August 2021

- Taught master's courses in special education, covering advanced concepts and practices
- Advised graduate students and guided them through the thesis development and research process

- Taught undergraduate courses in special education and mathematics education, including foundational courses
- Developed and revised courses for the special education concentration to ensure relevance and rigor
- Collaborated with colleagues to design master's and doctoral level courses in special education and single-case research methods
- Served as Program Coordinator for the M.Ed. and Ph.D. Special Education programs, overseeing curriculum, advising, and program development

### **Adjunct Assistant Professor – College of Education**

University of Texas – El Paso, United States

August 2016 – December 2020

- Taught online undergraduate courses through the Blackboard learning platform, facilitating virtual learning and engagement
- Designed and managed course content, ensuring alignment with learning objectives and academic standards
- Developed grading rubrics and assessed student performance, providing prompt feedback and evaluations
- Engaged with students through email for academic support, clarifications, and guidance

### **Online Instructional Coach**

Florida International University, University of Texas – El Paso & Permian Basin, United States

May 2014 – December 2017

- Graded all student assignments, ensuring consistency and adherence to academic standards
- Provided detailed feedback to support student learning and improve performance
- Responded promptly to student emails, offering guidance, clarification, and academic support
- Maintained effective communication with students to foster engagement and address individual learning needs

### **Certified Special Education Teacher (EC-12)**

Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District and Houston Independent School District, Texas, United States

August 2013 – July 2015

- Taught high school mathematics, including Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Math Models and Applications, to students in grades 9-12
- Provided individualized and small group instruction as a co-teacher and resource room teacher to support diverse learning needs
- Developed and implemented accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities, aligning with each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP)

- Managed all aspects of IEP documentation, including goal-setting, progress monitoring, and compliance reporting
- Participated actively in Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) teams to support students' academic and behavioral development
- Engaged in professional collaboration with colleagues and parents to enhance student success and advocate for special education best practices
- Maintained a safe and supportive classroom environment, fostering positive social interactions and respect for all students
- Utilized data-driven approaches to inform instruction and support students' progress in meeting educational and behavioral goals
- Served as a member of the Inclusion Intervention Team, collaborating to implement effective strategies for supporting students with diverse needs
- Assisted with career and vocational training, helping students develop skills for post-graduation success
- Coached baton twirling, promoting discipline, teamwork, and physical fitness among students

#### **Graduate Teaching Assistant**

Texas A&M University, United States  
May 2013 – August 2013

#### **Student-Teacher Supervisor Trainee**

Texas A&M University, United States  
January 2012 – December 2012

#### **Graduate Teaching Assistant**

Texas A&M University, United States  
August 2011 – May 2012

#### **Graduate Research Assistant**

Texas A&M University  
August 2009 – July 2011

#### **Certified Substitute Teacher**

Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District, Texas, United States  
August 2010 – July 2012

#### **Certified Special Education Teacher (EC-12)**

Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District, Texas, United States  
August 2007 – July 2009

- Taught high school mathematics to students in grades 9-12, specializing in Algebra 1 and Geometry
- Provided instruction as both a co-teacher in inclusive classrooms and a resource room teacher for individualized support

- Prepared and maintained Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and other required special education documentation
- Adapted curriculum and instructional strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners
- Collaborated with general education teachers to ensure inclusive practices and curriculum modifications in co-taught classrooms
- Conducted regular assessments to monitor student progress and adjust learning plans accordingly
- Participated in parent-teacher conferences to discuss student progress and address specific educational needs
- Served as a member of the Response to Intervention (RTI) and Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) teams, supporting student behavior and academic growth
- Assisted with career and vocational training for students to prepare them for post-secondary transitions
- Engaged in regular professional development to stay current with best practices in special education

### **Substitute Teacher (Designated)**

Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada, United States  
April 2004 – August 2007

### **DOCTORAL DISSERTATION**

Williams, C. D. (2014). Curriculum-based measurement as an intervention: A literature review and meta-analysis. Texas A&M University-College Station. Dissertation  
Chair: Yvonne Goddard, Ph.D.

Committee Members: Victor Wilson, Shanna Hagan-Burke, and Yeping Li.

### **RESEARCH PROJECTS and GRANT-WRITING EXPERIENCE**

- |             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 2020 – 2021 | Williams, C. D. & Agbenyega, J. Online and hybrid teaching and learning processes and outcomes: A systematic review of best evidenced-based practices.  |
| 2020 - 2021 | El Zein, F., Santos, I., <b>Williams, C. D.</b> , & Jasperse, S. M. Effective pedagogic strategies for online and hybrid teaching and learning: Findings from Abu Dhabi schools.                        |
| 2020 - 2021 | Woolsey, M. L., <b>Williams, C. D.</b> , Lewis-Traylor, C., Kharbet, F., & Melkonian, M. COVID-19: Stakeholder perceptions of distance learning for students with disabilities.                         |
| 2019 - 2020 | Brezial, S. J. & <b>Williams, C. D.</b> Teaching while black and male: A phenomenological study of the racialized professional experiences of underrepresented African American male k-12 public school |

teachers.

- 2017 - 2018 Rashad, F. F. & **Williams, C. D.** Screen media as an educational tool to teach English-learning infants language. Emirates College for Advanced Education Research Grant.
- 2015 - 2018 Areepattamannil, S., Al Suweidl, S. S. M., Al Hassan, S., Khine, M. S., Woolsey, M. L., Tennant, L., Welch, A. G., **Williams, C. D.**, Rashad, F. F., & Melkonian, M. Beyond abc's and 123's: A two-year longitudinal study of the impact of kindergarten education on child outcomes in Abu Dhabi. A.D.E.C. Award for Research Excellence.
- 2016 - 2017 Tennant, L., Woolsey, M. L., Al Hassan, S., **Williams, C. D.**, Saqr, S., & Rashad, F. Emirati pre-service teachers' global self-esteem and self-efficacy in classroom management.
- 2012 Diversity Project: Texas A&M University Dean's Office Project  
Collected data from various universities to address diversity within the Colleges of Education
- 2011 Assisted graduate student with coding of reading articles for dissertation data / Assisted with literature review for an IES grant submission

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Published Peer-Reviewed Manuscripts**

- Williams, C., Hojeij, Z., Johnson, J. D., Eppard, J., & McKeown, K. (2025). Navigating educational mistakes in learning: Cultural perspectives of emirati students and expatriate instructors in higher education. *Journal of International Students*, 15(12), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.32674/5z34ya54>
- Meda, L., Efthymiou, E., AlHammadi, M., **Williams, C.** & Fteiha, M. (2023). Conceptualizing and reimagining the future of inclusive education in the UAE. *Open Education Studies*, 5(1), 20220205. <https://doi.org/10.1515/edu-2022-0205>
- Eppard, J., **Williams, C.**, Hojeij, Z., Johnson, J. D. (2022). Ipad integration: How parents and students at a Dubai-based indian school perceive its effectiveness. *International Journal of Education in Mathematics, Science, and Technology (IJEMST)*, 10(2), 372-390. <https://doi.org/10.46328/ijemst.2079>
- Johnson, J. & **Williams, C. D.** (2020). Mobile learning features preferred: An examination of students in the united arab emirates. *International Electronic*

*Journal of Mathematics Education*, 15(3), em0596.  
<https://doi.org/10.29333/iejme/8325>

Shih, M., Calhoon, M. B., Olson, C. L., & **Williams, C. D.** (2014). Using computation curriculum-based measurement probes for error pattern analysis. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 49(5). 281-289. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451213513957>

### **Published Magazine Articles**

Williams, C. D. (2025). Game-based learning promotes inclusive strategies. *Edu Insights*, 2.

Williams, C. D. (2018). Special needs education: Trends and future outlook in the UAE. *The Knowledge Review* October 2018. 66-67.  
<http://magazine.theknowledgereview.com/The-10-Best-Value-Institutes-In-UAE-2018-October2018/#page=69>

### **Published Book Chapters**

Alhammadi, M.M., Meda, L., Efthymiou, E., **Williams, C.**, Fteiha, M. (2024). Exploring Pre-service Teachers' Preparedness for Inclusive Education Amidst COVID-19 Distance Learning in the UAE. In: El Sayary, A., Olowoselu, R. (eds) *Interdisciplinary Approaches for Educators' and Learners' Well-being*. Springer, Cham. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-65215-8\\_18](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-65215-8_18)

### **Published Blog Articles**

Williams, C. (2023). Do you take the stairs or the elevator? How the universal design for learning (UDL) can enhance student achievement and well-being. SEA Community Blog, Sharjah Education Academy. <https://sea.ac.ae/do-you-take-the-stairs-or-the-elevator/>

### **Published Abstracts**

Williams, C. D. (2018). Educational considerations for using manipulatives in mathematics.

Front. Neurosci. Conference Abstract: International Conference – Educational Neuroscience.

Williams, C. D. (2016). Does progress monitoring increase student achievement? Curriculum- based measurement in mathematics. Front. Neurosci. Conference Abstract: International Conference – Educational Neuroscience. doi: 10.3389/conf.fnins.2016.92.00027

### **Editorial Board**

International Journal of Technology in Education and Science

### **Guest Reviewer**

2019 Guest reviewer for the American Educational Research Journal  
2018 Guest reviewer for Educational Researcher

- 2017 Guest abstract reviewer for the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Education  
2012 Assisted advisor as guest reviewer for Educational Administration Quarterly  
2011 Assisted advisor as guest reviewer for Journal of Teacher Education  
2010 Guest reviewer for AERA conference proposals

### **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

- Williams, C. D. (February 2025). Panel Moderator: Inclusive education: Empowering students with diverse learning needs. Sharjah International Summit on Improvement in Education, United Arab Emirates
- Williams, C. D. & Hamid, Wajeeha. (February 2024). Untold stories of a game-based learning center. Sharjah International Summit on Improvement in Education, United Arab Emirates
- Williams, C. D. (May 2023). Retrieval Practice. Different Learners, Equal Opportunities Seminar by the Sharjah Center for Learning Disabilities in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
- Williams, C. D. (November 2022). Game-based learning for diverse students. Sharjah Center for Learning Difficulties Third Learning Difficulties Conference in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.
- Williams, C. D. (October 2019). Instilling inclusivity: Teaching students of determination. Panel Moderator at the Qudwa Forum in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- Williams, C. D. & Johnson, J. D. (June 2019). Undergraduate student preference of mobile learning features to make sense of mathematics. Poster presented at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies in Palma de Mallorca, Spain.
- Williams, C. D. (April 2018). Playing with mathematics. Workshop presented at the International Conference on Education in Mathematics, Science and Technology in Marmaris, Turkey.
- Williams, C. D. (March 2018). Educational considerations for using manipulatives in mathematics. Poster presented at the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Educational Neuroscience in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- Williams, C. D. (February 2018). Turn math worksheets into activities. Workshop presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference of Education in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.
- Williams, C. D. (2018). Differentiated Instruction in Math and Worksheet-less Mathematics. Workshop for the First Subject Teacher Forum at the Teacher Training Institute in Ajman, United Arab Emirates.

Williams, C. D. (April 2016). To use or not to use progress monitoring as an intervention in mathematics. Oral presentation presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual International Conference on Education in Bangkok, Thailand.

Woolsey, M. L., Tennant, L., & **Williams, C. D.** (March 2016). Workshop A: Informal assessment of at-risk students and progress monitoring. Workshop B: Accommodations vs modifications: The stand-off! Workshop presented at the International Conference on Inclusive Education: Education for Diversity in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Williams, C. D. (February 2016). Does progress monitoring increase student achievement? Curriculum-based measurement in mathematics. Poster presented at The International Conference on Educational Neuroscience in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Williams, C. D. (February 2016). Curriculum-based measurement in mathematics as an intervention: A meta-analysis. Poster presented at the International Teacher Education Conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Williams, C. D. (October 2015). The effects of social media and protection strategies. Oral presentation presented at The International Conference on the Protection from Sexual Harassment in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Calvo, B., Tucker, M., & **Williams, C. D.** (May 2014). Enhancing student outcomes in online learning with instructional coaches. Roundtable discussion presented at the Innovations in Online Learning Conference in San Antonio, Texas, United States.

Williams, C. D. (April 2013). Curriculum-based measurement in mathematics: A meta-analysis. Poster presented at the Houston Symposium for Research in Education and Psychology in Houston, Texas, United States.

Williams, C. D. (April 2011). Improving mathematical performance of struggling high school students. Poster presented at the Council for Exceptional Children Convention and Expo in National Harbor, Maryland, United States.

Goddard, Y. & **Williams, C. D.** (October 2010). Connecting response to intervention (RtI) and differentiated instruction. Paper presented at the Council for Learning Disabilities Conference in Myrtle Beach, Florida, United States.

Williams, C. D. (May 2010). Self-regulatory strategies in mathematics for students with learning disabilities at the secondary level. Poster presented at the Association for Behavior Analysis International Conference in San Antonio, Texas, United States.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS**

Williams, C. D. (2024). The power of play: Using game-based learning at home and in the classroom. Presented to parents and teachers online for the Lenatalam Ma'an Workshop Series with Sharjah Education Academy, United Arab Emirates

Williams, C. D. (2022). Strategies for Diverse Learners. Presented to teachers and teaching assistants at GEMS American Academy in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Williams, C. D. (2021). Early identification and intervention. Online webinar for Al Yasmina School Parents, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Williams, C. D. (2021). Teaching and learning strategies 4-week professional development workshop series. Online workshops, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSSxpG3QegzWU8thb9no4DsXtrTKEkWUp>

Williams, C. D. (2021). Introduction to special education 4-week professional development workshop series. Online workshops, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates  
<https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLSSxpG3QegzVHObOa095zpXaUkiADT1jG>

Williams, C. D. (2021). Personalized learning. Online workshop for Al Yasmina School, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Rashad, F. F., **Williams, C. D.**, & Lewis-Traylor, C. (2020). Strategies for the student-centered classroom. Workshop online for Educators Without Borders, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Williams, C. D. (2019). Lesson planning for inclusive classrooms. Workshop at the Emirates College for Advanced Education, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Williams, C. D. (2019). Inclusive strategies for struggling students. Workshop at the Emirates College for Advanced Education, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Williams, C. D. (2019). Lesson Planning. Workshop as part of the Emirates College for Advanced Education student internship orientation in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Williams, C. D. (2016). Teaching math to students with special needs. Workshop at the Future Center in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Williams, C. D. & Parkman, S. (2016). Dynamic duo of tools for mobile learning in the classroom. Workshop as part of the Emirates College for Advanced Education Faculty Development Day in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

April 2023 – December 2023

Professional Development workshops for Al Sabah International Indian School  
Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

April 2019 – December 2020

Al Mubarakah program development with Sheikha Shamma bint Sultan bin Khalifa al  
Nahyan

-Content Development Team Member

January 2019 – July 2020

Providing English immersion classes for displaced Syrian children in collaboration  
with the United Nations and Retal Center – Abu Dhabi, United Arab  
Emirates

May 2019 – August 2019

Emirates College for Advanced Education 4-week Summer Camp.

-Camp for grades 10-12

-Development Team Member

June 2019 – July 2019

Emirates College for Advanced Education Helping Hands & Lotus Retal Centre

-5-week Summer Program

-Program for displaced Syrian children

-Coordinator & Developer

February 2019 – June 2019

Parent Volunteer for Student Reading at Repton School - Abu Dhabi, United Arab  
Emirates

October 2017 – November 2017

6-week Autism Workshop for children with GOALS UAE

-Creative Designer

October 2016 – November 2016

6-week Autism Workshop for children with GOALS UAE



