



2020 INCENTIVE AWARD BROOKE ISTAS

Brooke Istas, a professor at Cowley College and doctoral student at Southern Methodist University, has been honored with an Incentive Award in support of her research study to identify math perceptions with a goal of informing future interventions for adult learners.

Brooke's study "Adult Learners' Perceptions of Mathematics Class" seeks to understand how adult learners' memories, experiences and feelings about mathematics shape their perceptions about mathematical learning and change their relationship to math.

"This research is vital since so many adult learners struggle with math due to their own anxieties and fears," explains Brooke Istas, doctoral student at Southern Methodist University.

By understanding the mathematical journey of adult basic math learners and their relationship with mathematics, we hope to uncover the phenomenon that was a key turning point. The point at which mathematics learning went from a positive experience to a negative experience; from a growth mindset to a fixed mindset. The study will also look at learners' understanding of how math is used in the world around them.

Qualtrics surveys will prompt students to share their proudest and worst math moment, early memories of mathematics, favorite and least favorite aspects of math, and how they believe numbers and quantities would be useful outside of school. In-person follow up interviews will expand on the data collected.

The short-term outcome is to understand math anxiety/trauma, and the long-term outcome is to create interventions based on this understanding to mitigate this trauma. This could potentially help hundreds of thousands of adult learners so that they can achieve their high school equivalency and move into livable wage jobs or continue their education to post-secondary education. Both the adult learner and society will benefit as many learners will be able to move off government assistance programs and become self-sustaining in society.