# Megan Elizabeth Best, Ph.D.

Department of Early Childhood, Special Education, and Counselor Education,
University of Kentucky College of Education

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# EDUCATION Ph.D. in Special Education University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Champaign, Illinois Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michele Schutz M.Ed. in Special Education Endorsement: Autism Spectrum Disorder Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI B.S.Ed. in Special Education and Elementary Education Endorsements: Learning Disabilities, English Language Arts Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE Assistant Professor Department of Early Childhood, Special Education, and Counselor Education, University of Kentucky

Assistant Professor Department of Early Childhood, Special Education, and Counselor Education, University of Kentucky Lexington, Kentucky	2025-present
Research Assistant Special Education Department, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Champaign, Illinois	2021-2025
Research Assistant Pediatrics Department, University of Illinois Chicago Chicago, Illinois	2022-2023
Adjunct Professor Special Education Department, DePaul University Chicago, Illinois	2021-2022
Racial Equity Specialist- Special Education Leader Sankofa Educational Consulting	2020-2021

Chicago, Illinois

# **Special Education Administrator** 2019-2021 Chicago Public Schools, Office of Diverse Learner Supports and Services (ODLSS) Chicago, IL **Low-Incidence Special Education High School Teacher** 2018-2019 Chicago Public Schools, Whitney Young High School Chicago, IL **Low-Incidence Special Education High School Teacher** 2013-2018 Elim Christian Services School Palos Heights, IL AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND ACHIEVEMENTS **AWARDS** Alice H. Hayden Emerging Leader Award 2025 **TASH Graduate Student Leadership Award-Special Recognition** 2025 University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Graduate College **TASH 2024 Conference Research Poster Winner** 2024 Navigating advocacy: Youth with disabilities share their experiences and perspectives List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent by Their Students 2024 University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, College of Education William E. Albin & Charlotte C. Young Scholarship 2024 University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, College of Education 2024 **DCDT Early Career Scholarship** Council for Exceptional Children: Division on Career and Development and Transition Nominated for The Champaign News-Gazette Person of the Year 2023 Nominated by local vocational coordinator for developing work-based learning opportunities for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities **Robert & Linda Hauser Graduate Award** 2023

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, College of Education

2022

2022
2022
2022
023-2025
022-2023
021-2025
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# **CERTIFICATIONS**

# Illinois Professional Educator License

Learning Behavior Specialist II

IEIN: 1024232

2012-present

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Graduate College Mentoring Certificate

# **PUBLICATIONS**

# **Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles**

Schutz, M., **Best**, **M.**, Rivera, S., & Taylor, A. (*accepted*). A review of school social worker roles in preparing students with disabilities for adulthood. *Children and Schools*.

Schutz, M., Ha, S., **Best, M.,** & Kwon, C. (2025). Collaborations within and across three service systems for delivering pre-employment transition services. *Career Development and* 

- *Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 21651434251347520. https://doi.org/10.1177/21651434251347520
- **Best, M.,** Lindsay, R., Demissie, S., Burakov, I., Ramos-Torres, S., & Burke, M. (2025). From awareness to action: Facilitators and advocacy in healthcare by autistic adults. *Autism*, 13623613251343350. https://doi.org/10.1177/13623613251343350
- **Best, M.,** Lindsay, R., Demissie, S., Burakov, I., Ramos-Torres, S., & Burke, M. (2025). Leveraging feedback from autistic adults to develop an app to access healthcare services. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-025-10017-9
- **Best, M.,** & Burke, M. (2024). The involvement of youth with disabilities, their parents, and special education teachers in determining transition services: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-024-09997-x
- **Best, M.,** Burke, M., Rossetti, Z., Demissie, S., Hughes, O., Ramirez, M., & Kunzier, T. (2024). Perspectives of transition-aged youth with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities about self-advocacy and civic engagement. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 1-20. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-024-09985-1/
- **Best. M.,** Johnston, A., Demissie, S., Kim, J., Khanna, R., Fulton, K., Hardy, A., Cheung, W., Kunzier, T., Hughes, O., Burke, M., & Rossetti, Z. (2024). Conducting a pilot evaluation of a civic engagement program for youth with disabilities. *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal*, 4(2), 3. https://doi.org/10.59620/2694-1104.1086
- Burke, M., Best, M., Cheung, W. C., Dewalt, L., & Taylor, J. L. (2024). Exploring the involvement of autistic youth in decision-making about services. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, 62(4), 323-333. https://doi.org/10.1352/1934-9556-62.4.323
- Best, M., Burke, M, & Arnold, C. (2024). Examining caregiving networks among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. Advanced online publication.

  <a href="https://www.aaidd.org/docs/default-source/prepressarticles/examining-support-networks-among-individuals-with-intellectual-and-developmental-disabilities.pdf?sfvrsn=7a0e0221\_0</a>
- Burke, M., Terol, A., **Best, M.,** Cheung, W., & Hardy, A. (2024). Improving the cultural responsiveness of measures for Latino families of children with autism. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-024-09954-8

- Berg, K., Mihaila, I., Feinstein, R., Shiu, C., Gussin, H., Acharya, K., Gladstone, T., Bernard, L., **Best, M.**, Renz, E., Abdallahf, G., Weldy, S., Herrman, D., Lynch, E., Gerges, M., Perez, P., Bucholz, K., Msall, M., Aaron, S., Mutti, M., Arnold, C., Danguilaan, C., Argueta, I., Hunger, M., Pela, E., Diviak, K., Kuhn, J., Berbaum, M., & Vaan Voorhees, B. (2024). BEhavioral Health Stratified Treatment (BEST) to optimize transition to adulthood for youth with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, 136, 107374. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cct.2023.107374
- Burke, M., Li, C., Cheung, W., Johnston, A., **Best, M.,** Fulton, K., Hardy, A., & Rossetti, Z. (2024). Identifying the correlates of individual, peer, and systemic advocacy among parents of children with disabilities. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-024-09957-5
- Burke, M., Chung, W. C., **Best, M.**, Taylor, J. L., & Dewalt, L. (2023). Measuring what matters: Considerations for the measurement of adult services for individuals with autism. *Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities*, 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10882-023-09916-6

# **Manuscripts Under Review**

- **Best., M.,** Rossetti, Z., Hughes, O., Demissie, S., Kunzier, T., & Lindsay, R. (*under review*). Empowering self-advocacy: Youth with disabilities share their experiences and perspectives.
- **Best, M.,** & Burke, M. (*under review*). Exploring the involvement of youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their parents, and their special education teachers in determining transition services.
- Kuhn, J., **Best. M.,** Thornton, A., Cheenghee, K., Bucholz, K., Pickard, K., Gladstone, T., & Berg, K. (*under review*). Adaptations to depression prevention programming for a diverse population of youth with disabilities.
- Schutz, M., Ha, S., & **Best, M**. (*under review*). A participatory case study of one rural community's local transition solutions.
- Schutz, M., Rowe, D., **Best, M.,** & Ha, S. (*under review*). Leveraging rural cultural wealth toward equity-driven secondary transition research in rural communities.

# **Manuscripts in Preparation**

**Best, M. E.**, Schutz, M. A., Ross, M. E., Biggs, E. E., Cole, A., & Foley, H. R. (*in preparation*). The transition planning involvement of students who use augmentative and alternative communication, their parents, and school personnel.

- Biggs, E., Cole, A., Schutz, M., Best, M., Ross, M., Foley, H., & Nunnelly, J. (in preparation). Perceptions of barriers and facilitators to successful transition to adulthood for youth and young adults who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC).
- **Best, M.,** & Schutz, M. (in preparation). Navigating transition services through mixed methods: Special educators' roles in supporting students with disabilities.

### PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOPS

# **Conference Presentations**

- **Best, M.** (November, 2025). Partnering for success: *Planning transition services with students and parents at the center*. Kentucky Council for Exceptional Children Conference. Louisville, KY.
- Biggs, E., Ross, M., **Best, M.,** & Cole, A. (November, 2025). *Voices from the fields: Empowering youth who use AAC for successful transition planning.* OCALIONLINE 2025 Conference.
- Nugent, A., Collett, J., & Best. M. (October, 2025). Youth as bridges: Elevating disability informed policy. MidSouth Policy Workshop. Lexington, KY.
- **Best, M.,** (October, 2025). *Sitlington Emerging Research Award Shared Presentation*. DCDT 2025 Conference. Denver, CO.
- **Best, M.,** Ross, M., Schutz, M., & Cole., A. (October, 2025). *Transition planning implications for youth who use AAC: The voices of students, families, and service providers*. DCDT 2025 Conference. Denver, CO.
- **Best, M.,** (August, 2025). Charting the course: A mixed methods investigation into special educators' role in enhancing transition services for students with disabilities. Sitlington Emerging Research Award Competition. DCDT 2025 Conference. Denver, CO.
- Biggs, E., **Best, M.,** & Cole, A. (December 2024). *Empowering voices: Participation of youth using AAC in transition planning.* TASH 2024 Conference. New Orleans, LA.
- **Best, M.,** Rossetti, Z., Hughes, O., Kunzier, T., Demissie, S., & Lindsay, R. (December, 2024). *Navigating advocacy: Youth with disabilities share their experiences and perspectives.* Poster Session. TASH 2024 Conference. New Orleans, LA.
- **Best, M.,** Lindsay, R., Demissie, S., Burakov, I., Ramos-Torres, S., & Burke, M. (December, 2024). *Leveraging feedback from autistic adults to develop a healthcare app.* Breakout Session. TASH 2024 Conference. New Orleans, LA.

- **Best. M**. (October, 2024). A pilot evaluation of a transition services instructional program for youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Poster Session. Division on Career Development and Transition 2024 Conference. Chantilly, VA.
- Schutz, M., Ha, S., & **Best. M**. (October, 2024). *An in-depth examination of local collaborations across three services systems for delivering pre-employment transition services*. Breakout Session. Division on Career Development and Transition 2024 Conference. Chantilly, VA.
- **Best.** M., Lindsay, R., Demissie, S., Burakov., I., Ramos-Torres, S., & Burke, M. (June, 2024). *Exploring the healthcare experiences of autistic adults*. Concurrent Session. AAIDD 2024 Conference. Louisville, KY.
- Kuhn, J., **Best, M.,** Thornton, A., Mihaila, I., Buchholz, Gladstone, T., Shiu, C. Hassan, G., Kahan, S., Picckard, K., & Berg, K. (April, 2024). *Adaptations to cognitive behavioral group therapy for the prevention of depression and anxiety among youth with intellectual/developmental disabilities.* Poster Session. Gatlinburg Conference 2024. Kansas City, KS.
- **Best, M.** (March, 2024). *A triadic exploration: Involvement in determining transition services.* Paper Presentation. UIUC Graduate Student Conference. Champaign, IL.
- Li, C., Burke, M., Cheung, C., Johnston, A., **Best, M.,** Terol, K., Fulton, K., & Hardy, A. (January, 2024). *Correlates of advocacy activities in sibling caregivers of individuals with autism*. Poster Session. Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities 2024 Conference. Honolulu, HI.
- **Best**, M., & Burke, M. (November, 2023). *A triadic exploration: Involvement in determining transition services*. Breakout Session. TASH 2023 Conference. Baltimore, MD.
- Schutz, M., & **Best, M.** (November, 2023). *Uncovering unique rural supports for transitioning individuals with significant disabilities*. Breakout Session. TASH 2023 Conference. Baltimore, MD.
- **Best, M.,** & Burke, M. (October, 2023). *Planning for the future: A scoping literature review of universal design for transition (UDT)*. Poster Session. Division on Career Development and Transition 2023 Conference. Reno, NV.
- Rossetti, Z., Burke, M., Hughes, O., Kunzier, T., Ramirez, M., Khanna, R., Kim, J., Hardy, A., Fulton, K., Cheung, C., **Best, M.,** Johnston, A., Demissie, S., & Li, C. (June, 2023). *Perspectives on advocacy by parents and transition-aged youth with IDD.* Issue Brief Presentation. AAIDD 2023 Conference. Pittsburgh, PA
- **Best, M.,** & Burke, M. (June, 2023). *Involvement in selecting transition services for youth with IDD: A systematic literature review.* Poster Symposia Session. AAIDD 2023 Conference. Pittsburgh, PA

- Burke, M., Rossetti, Z., Hardy, A., Fulton, K., Cheung, C., **Best, M.,** Johnston, A., & Demissie, S. (June, 2023). *Examining the testimonials for the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.* Poster Session. AAIDD 2023 Conference. Pittsburgh, PA
- Carlson, S. R., **Best, M.,** & Taylor, J. L. (April, 2023). *Barriers to goal attainment for autistic youth and their families*. Concurrent Presentation. AAIDD 2023 Conference. Pittsburgh, PA
- **Best, M.,** Burke, M., & Arnold, C. (April, 2023). *Examining the correlates of caregiving support networks among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).*Poster Session. Gatlinburg Conference. Kansas City, MO.
- Carlson, S. R., **Best, M.**, & Taylor, J. L. (April, 2023). *Barriers to goal attainment for autistic youth and their family members*. Poster Session. Gatlinburg Conference. Kansas City, MO.
- **Best, M.,** & Burke, M. (November, 2022). Exploring the involvement of youth with autism in service access decisions. Presentation. TASH 2022 Conference. Phoenix, AZ
- Donnelly, N., & **Best, M.** (March, 2022). Supporting families through the assessment process.

  Breakout session. Illinois New Teacher Collaborative 2022 Leadership Conference –
  Building Supportive Systems: Addressing Teacher Shortages through Induction and Mentoring. Champaign, IL
- **Best, M.** (March, 2016). Can you hear me now? Implementing alternative writing strategies for students with low-incidence disabilities. Breakout session. Illinois Council for Expectational Children Conference, Chicago, IL

### **Invited Panels and Presentations**

- **Best, M.** (October, 2024). *Conducting special education with and alongside individuals with disabilities.* Presentation. University of Kentucky, Human Development Institute, LEND. Lexington, KY.
- **Best. M.,** Johnston, A., & Demissie, S. (December, 2024). *Conducting a pilot evaluation of a civic engagement program for youth with disabilities*. Podcast. Author Insights: Developmental Disabilities Network Journal.
- Schutz, M., **Best, M.,** & Ha, S. (November, 2024). Career development and employment considerations for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Webinar. Illinois Department of Human Services: Division of Rehabilitation Services.
- **Best, M.** (August, 2024). *College of education teaching assistant training*. Presentation and Panel. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, College of Education. Champaign, IL.

- **Best. M.** (March, 2024). Conducting an early research project as a doctoral student milestone. Presentation. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, College of Education. Champaign, IL.
- Miller, A., **Best, M.,** & Nellis, T. (November, 2023). *Collaborating with people with disabilities in research and teaching panel*. Panel. TASH Early Career and Research Network Pre-Conference Session. TASH 2024 Conference. Baltimore, MD.
- **Best, M.,** Lindsay, R., Demissie, S., & Burke, M. (August, 2023). *Implementing user-centered design to adapt a healthcare app for autistic adults*, AIR-P Community Research Network Lightning Presentation. Online.

# Seminars, Webinars, and Workshops

- **Best, M.**, Malouf, E., & Price, R. (2023). *Transition series for those with complex support needs:* Supported Decision Making. Webinar. Family Matters Parent Training Information Center, IL.
- **Best, M.**, & Price, R. (2023). *Transition series for those with complex support needs:*Real life transition stories. Webinar. Family Matters Parent Training Information Center, IL.
- **Best, M.,** & Price, R. (2023). Community conversations at UIUC: Conversations about inclusion and accessibility for individuals with disabilities on campus. Special Education Graduate Student Organization at University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Urbana-Champaign, IL.
- **Best, M.** (2023). Transition series for those with complex support needs: Instructional practices to support implementation of the IEP. Webinar. Family Matters Parent Training Information Center, IL.
- **Best, M.,** & Price, R. (2022). *Transition series for those with complex support needs: Transition assessments.* Webinar. Family Matters Parent Training Information Center, IL.
- **Best, M.** (2022). Transition series for those with complex support needs: Student involvement in IEPs. Webinar. Family Matters Parent Training Information Center, IL.

# UNIVERSITY TEACHING, SUPERVISION, AND MENTORING

### **Sole Instructor Courses and Co-Instructor Courses**

Department of Early Childhood, Special Education, and Counselor Education EDS 517: Assistive Technology <i>Instructor, Undergraduate, In-Person</i>	
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign – Champaign, Illinois Department of Special Education SPED 431: Assistive Technology and Physical Disabilities Instructor, Undergraduate, In-Person	Fall 2024
SPED 322: Introduction to Intellectual Disabilities  Co-Instructor, Undergraduate, In-Person	Spring 2022
<b>DePaul University</b> - Chicago, Illinois Department of Counseling and Special Education SER 328: Contemporary Issues in Special Education Instructor, Undergraduate, Online	Spring 2022
SER 325: Topics in Special Education Instructor, Undergraduate, Online	Fall 2021
SER 322: Teaching Students with Significant Disabilities Instructor, Undergraduate, Online	Winter 2021
Practicum Supervisor Courses	
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign – Champaign, Illinois EDPR 250: Educational Practicum Practicum Supervisor, Undergraduate, In-Person	Spring 2024
EDPR 250: Educational Practicum Practicum Supervisor, Undergraduate, In-Person	Fall 2023
Other Courses	
Teaching Assistant University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign – Champaign, Illinois SPED 117: The Culture of Disability Teaching Assistant, Undergraduate, Online	Fall 2021
Other Mentoring Experiences University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign – Champaign, Illinois Undergraduate Research Apprenticeship Program Mentor Graduate College, In-person, Online	Spring 2024
Department of Special Education Department Doctoral Student Mentor In-person, Online	2022-2025

Guest Lecturer University of Kentucky- Lexington, Kentucky Human Development Institute Kentucky Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities	Fall 2025
Graduate, In-Person  Purdue University- West Lafayette, Indiana Department of Educational Studies  EDPS 649: Doctoral Seminar- Research Dissemination  Graduate, Online	Fall 2025
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign – Champaign, Illinois Department of Curriculum and Instruction CI 449: Designing Inclusive Educational Technology <i>Undergraduate, Online</i>	Fall 2024
Department of Special Education SPED 444: Career Development and Transition Undergraduate, In-Person	Fall 2024
SPED 593: Concepts and Issues in Special Education II <i>Graduate, In-Person</i>	Spring 2024
SPED 444: Career Development and Transition <i>Undergraduate, In-Person</i>	Fall 2023
SPED 405: General Educators' Role in Special Education Undergraduate, In-Person	Fall 2023
SPED 593: Concepts and Issues in Special Education II Graduate, In-Person	Spring 2023
SPED 405: General Educators' Role in Special Education Undergraduate, In-Person	Fall 2022
Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences SHS 333: Children with NDD Across Communication Contexts Undergraduate, Online	Fall 2022
<b>DePaul University</b> – Chicago, Illinois Department of Counseling and Special Education SER 471: Student Teaching in Special Education Seminar <i>Undergraduate</i> , <i>Online</i>	Winter 2021

# **GRANTS**

Funded Marissa Zelinger Research Award (\$4,000) University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, College of Education Department of Special Education Role: Co-PI.		
<b>Dissertation Award Competition (\$2,000)</b> University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, College of Education Bureau of Educational Research	Dissertation Award Competition (\$2,000)  University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, College of Education  Bureau of Educational Research  Role: PI.	
	2023 2023	
		Autism Intervention Network for Physical Health (AIR-P) (\$2,500) Implementing user-centered design to adapt a healthcare app for autistic adults. Role: PI.
Unfunded Robert P. Larson Grant (\$1,500) University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Research in Career Development Role: PI.	2024	
SERVICE		
University of Kentucky College of Education Project INSPIRE	2025-2026	
<b>Department of Early Childhood, Special Education, and Counselor Education</b> Co-Advisor of Special Olympics College Club	2025-2026	
University of Illinois Urbana Champaign		

College of Education	
Grievance Committee, Elected Graduate Student Representative	2023-2024
Faculty and Staff Awards Committee, Elected Graduate Student Representative	2023-2024
Graduate Student Network, Special Education Graduate Student Representative	2023-2024
Department of Special Education	
Special Education Doctoral Student Recruitment Committee	2024-2025
Special Education Graduate Student Association (SEGSA)	
• President	2023-2024
• Vice President	2022-2023
Service to Professional Organizations	
TASH Early Career and Student Network	2022-2025
Conference Proposal Reviews	
<ul> <li>CEC: Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT)</li> </ul>	2023-2025
• TASH	2022, 2024
Council for Exceptional Children	2022
Service to Local and State Level Organizations	
Kentucky Interagency Transition Council	2025-2026
<ul> <li>Commonwealth Council on Developmental Disabilities</li> </ul>	2025-2026
Illinois Council for Exceptional Children	2024-2025
<ul> <li>Quarterly Newsletter Contributor</li> </ul>	
Champaign Young Adult Transition Program	2024-2025
<ul> <li>Work-Based Learning Site Supervisor</li> </ul>	
Champaign Centennial High School Transition Program	2023-2024
<ul> <li>Work-Based Learning Site Supervisor</li> </ul>	
Collaboration with Champaign Urbana Adult Service Program	2023-2025
<ul> <li>Champaign County Disability Expo Event</li> </ul>	
Illinois Parent Training Information Center Intern	2022-2023
<ul> <li>Develop and implement webinars and blogs</li> </ul>	
Ad Hoc Journal Reviews	
Child and Adolescent Social Work	2025
Research and Practices for Persons with Severe Disabilities	2025-2026
Journal of Disability Policy Studies	2025-2026
Journal of Developmental and Physical Disabilities	2022-2025
Developmental Disabilities Network Journal	2022-2025
Journal of Adolescence	2023-2024
Journal of Child and Family Studies	2022-2024
Journal of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities	2022-2023
British Journal of Special Education	2022

American Association of University Women (AAUW)	2024-2025
American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)	2022-2025
Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)	2022-2025
<ul> <li>Division on Autism and Developmental Disabilities (DADD)</li> </ul>	
<ul> <li>Division on Career and Development and Transition (DCDT)</li> </ul>	
• Teacher Education Division (TED)	
TASH	2022-2025