Speaker 1: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Nicki Donnelson: We all know the world has changed and continues to change all the time. But how do teachers continue to reach students who interact in different ways? And how can teachers be confident that they are still teaching and reaching these students?

Nicki Donnelson: I'm Nicki Donnelson. Today on the Missouri State Journal, I have Dr. Stephanie Livers, assistant professor of Childhood Education and Family Studies at Missouri State University. Livers is interested in teacher preparation and researches professional development of those already in the field. She is careful to explain that critical perspective, or looking at multiple attitudes and interpretations, is important in working toward access and equity for all students. She explains.

Stefanie Livers: That entails dissecting our identity. Our teaching force is primarily white female, so how do we disrupt some of those structures so that our teaching force changes, and that we are able to meet the needs of each and every student who look different from us.

Nicki Donnelson: Livers performed studies with in-service teachers to learn about their self-reported efficacy after going through two years of professional development. She reveals some of the findings.

Stefanie Livers: Elementary teachers scored themselves higher, or saw themselves as, or just stronger confidence level with student-centered practices compared to secondary teachers and special education teachers with that one. Self-efficacy was tied overall with their self-reported teaching practices.

Nicki Donnelson: One takeaway, we need to disrupt ineffective teaching methods in the classroom. In order to do that, she said that people in all levels need to think creatively and consider options outside of the box.

Stefanie Livers: Looking at are we building relationships with students, so then that should impact the other variables to change some of the structures and practices that are in place. And that would be the same for higher ed. How can we make those experiences more authentic, so less on-campus and out in schools. How can we be innovative with technology? And how do we wrap our head around that? Right now, one of our teacher candidates requested to student teach in Utah. So, racking our brains how to make that happen. We're going to go for it. But how can technology support that? How can we still support her here at Missouri State as well as the people that we found in Utah to support her in the classroom. We're looking at how to document that and inform others to allow just a more global perspective on teaching, and our population's more transient so our students are going to want to teach in different places outside of Missouri, so how can we support that in the same manner as the students who want to stay in Missouri.

Nicki Donnelson: as a lifelong learner, Livers points out that she sees change in herself too. When she became an instructor she thought that making sure that her teacher candidates understood math and proper methods for teaching math was the most important thing.

Stefanie Livers: The longer that I have taught, and realized if they don't have relationships with students and build connections with people different from them, the teaching's not going to get through. Because without those relationships, or the buy-in invested in that community of learners, student achievement is still going to suffer. That's been an intentional piece. One of the research projects that's very personal with a colleague at Indiana University, is we are doing a co-ethnography, analyzing ourselves. So our identity, our perspectives, how did we choose the assignments that we do, and how's that impacting our teacher candidates? Then some of my assignments have come from that. So they do a children's literature project, which they have to choose a character who is different from themselves. And then how will that book build a community? And then how do you mathematize that book? And that's caused a lot of growth in many of them because they're choosing books to learn about a population that they might not be familiar with.

Nicki Donnelson: That was dr Stephanie lifers. I'm Nicki Donnelson for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at (417) 836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.