



SPECIAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION DISORDERS EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

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Assistant Professor*

Dr. Kern has been part of the SECD Family for 5 years! Dr. Kern has lead the department in getting the Dyslexia Certificate offered to students through UNO!

What led you to choose a career in special education?

Back in my hometown I had babysat for several children with significant disabilities from middle and high school, which was my introduction to the special education world. When I made the decision to go into teaching (which was not my first major in undergrad), I knew I wanted to be a special educator. Specifically, through my undergrad program I learned working with students with disabilities in the primary grades was really where I wanted to be. Working on foundational skills was my favorite aspect of teaching, with the bonus of singing and dancing all day long in my kindergarten classroom!

Can you tell us more about the Dyslexia Certificate and why you are passionate about it?

My passion for dyslexia work is twofold. First, reading is *really* important. Giving all students the skills they need to become proficient readers is a primary goal of education in general. I hope this line of coursework does that by imparting what we know from research on reading development, the brain, data implementation, and effective pedagogy to help teachers be more effective. Second, I think the dyslexia certificate is 100% responsive. It's not that I thought of a totally novel idea out of nowhere. Instead, I listened to teachers express their frustration with helping their students who were struggling to read, and there was a time when I was that frustrated teacher. My goal for this program is to give practitioners knowledge and confidence to help struggling readers.

What has been the best part about moving to Colorado?

The 340+ days of sunshine a year! This means more time outside for our family. We love being outside: bike riding, hiking, skiing, gardening, and just playing. We love to "choose outdoors" and if the weather cooperates, you'll usually find us exploring. The accessibility to the mountains means we ski all winter and spring, and hike all summer and fall.

What is something you would recommend everyone try at least once?

I would encourage anyone who has the opportunity to engage in an immersive travel experience in a totally different part of the world. I spent 12 weeks backpacking around southeast Asia one summer. It changed my life.

