

SUSAN C. BUSH-MECENAS

sbm@ucla.edu

EDUCATION

- 2013-2018 **University of Southern California**, Los Angeles, CA
PhD Urban Education Policy (Cognate: Organizational Theory)
Committee: Julie Marsh, Chair; Peer Fiss, Patricia Burch
- 2009-2010 **Stanford University**, Stanford, CA
MA Policy, Organization, and Leadership Studies
Advisory: Milbrey McLaughlin
- 2003-2007 **University of Southern California**, Los Angeles, CA
BM Music Education, *magna cum laude*
California Single-Subject Teaching Credential: K-12 Music

INTERESTS

Evaluation; Qualitative Case Study Methods, Policy Analysis;
Continuous Improvement; Educational Equity; Organizational and Institutional Theory;
Intermediary Organizations; School System Leadership and Management; Capacity Building.

EXPERIENCE

- 2026-present **University of California, Los Angeles, School of Education & Information Studies**
Assistant Professor of Evaluation in Education
- RAND Corporation, Behavioral and Policy Sciences**
- 2026-present *Adjunct Researcher*
- 2020-2026 *Policy Researcher*
- 2021-present **Pardee RAND Graduate School of Policy Analysis**
Affiliated Faculty
- 2020-present **Claremont Graduate University, School of Educational Studies**
Senior Research Fellow, Adjunct Faculty
- 2018-2020 **Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy**
Postdoctoral Fellow, in the research lab of Cynthia Coburn
- USC Center for Education Policy, Equity, & Governance**
- 2013-2018 *Research Associate*
- 2010-2013 *Project Manager*
- 2009-2010 **Stanford University John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities**
Research Assistant
- 2007-2009 **San Lorenzo Unified School District**
Teacher (K-12 Music and English Language Development Strategic Support)

CONTRACTS OR GRANTS, AS PI OR CO-PI

- 2025-2028 **Co-PI:** Evaluation of the State Implementation Fund; funded by Walton Family Foundation (\$4,600,000)
- 2022-2026 **Co-PI:** Evaluation of Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) High-Quality Instructional Materials and Professional Development Network; funded by Walton Family Foundation (\$1,950,000)
- 2020-2026 **Co-PI:** Networks for School Improvement Summative Evaluation on Intermediary Capacity Building; funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (\$7,689,000)
- 2023-2025 **Co-PI:** Randomized Control Trial of M-SENS Kindergarten Numeracy Curriculum; funded by US ED Education Innovation and Research grant (\$1,470,000)
- 2023-2025 **Co-PI:** Learning Creates Australia Evaluation; funded by Paul Ramsey Foundation (\$300,000)
- 2021-2024 **Co-PI:** AIM for Your Dreams: Access, Inspiration and Mentoring for Youth Through Cloud Mentoring Evaluation; funded by Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (\$367,000)
- 2018-2019 **PI:** Process Evaluation of Pilot of Statewide System of Support, funded by California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (\$18,400)

PUBLICATIONS

PEER- REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES

- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.,** Schweig, J., Diliberti, M, Mariano, L, & Kuhnfeld, M. (2024). Research, Interrupted: Addressing Practical and Methodological Considerations under Turbulent Conditions. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*.
- Perera, R. M., **Bush-Mecenas, S.,** & Schweig, J. D. (2023). Passive Investment: The Political Dynamics of Charter Expansion in Los Angeles' Portfolio District. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, 1-30.
- Chinman, M., Acosta, J., **Bush-Mecenas, S.,** Smucker, S., Farris, C., Fortson, B., ... & Tharp, A. (2023). Improving sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention from the bottom-up: a pilot of getting to outcomes in the US Military. *Prevention Science*, 1-13.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** (2022). "The Business of Teaching and Learning": Institutionalizing Equity in Educational Organizations Through Continuous Improvement. *American Educational Research Journal*, 59(3), 461-499.¹

¹ Awarded 2024 Best Publication by AERA Districts in Research and Reform Special Interest Group.

- Hashim, A., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Strunk, K.O., & Marsh, J.A. (2021). Inside the black box of school autonomy: How diverse school providers use autonomy for school improvement. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Marsh, J.A., & Strunk, K.O. (2020). Guiding principals: Middle-manager coaching and human capital reform. *Teachers College Record*, 122(10).
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, & Anderson, E. (2020). Scale and sustainability of education innovation and improvement [Annotated Bibliography]. *Oxford Bibliographies*.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** & Marsh, J.A. (2020). Building on shaky ground: Re-forming a divided system in Los Angeles. *Education Next*, 20(2).
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Montes de Oca, D., Marsh, J.A., & Hough, H. (2018). “Seeing the whole elephant”: Oakland’s use of multiple-measure data dashboards to empower school communities to improve. [Commentary]. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 26 (10).
- Marsh, J.A., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Strunk, K.O., Huguet, A., & Lincove, J. (2017). Evaluating teachers in the big easy: How organizational context shapes policy responses in New Orleans. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 34(9), pp. 539-570.²
- Marsh, J.A., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, & Hough, H. (2017). Learning from early adopters in the new accountability era: Insights from California's CORE waiver districts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 53(3), pp. 327-364.
- Strunk, K.O., Marsh, J.A., Hashim, A., & **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** (2016). Innovation and a return to the status quo: A mixed-methods study of reconstitution through the lens of organizational learning. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 38(3), pp. 549-577.
- Strunk, K.O., Marsh, J.A., Hashim, A., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, & Weinstein, T. (2016). The impact of turnaround reform on student achievement: Evidence and insights from the Los Angeles Unified School District. *Education Finance and Policy*, 11(3), pp. 251-282.
- Strunk, K.O., Marsh, J.A., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, & Duque, M. (2015). The best laid plans: An examination of school plan quality and implementation in a school improvement initiative. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 52(2), pp. 259-309.
- Marsh, J.A., Strunk, K.O., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, & Huguet, A. (2015). Democratic engagement in district reform: The evolving role of parents in the Los Angeles Public School Choice Initiative. [Politics of Education Yearbook], *Educational Policy*, 29(1), pp. 51-84.
- Marsh, J.A., Strunk, K.O., & **Bush, S.C.** (2013). Portfolio district reform meets school turnaround: Early implementation findings from the Los Angeles Public School Choice Initiative. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 51(4), pp. 498-527.

² Featured as a methodological example in Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2020) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook 4th Edition*.

REPORTS AND POLICY BRIEFS

Bush-Mecenas, S., Herman, R., Christianson, K., Wrabel, S.L., Nguyen, P., Zelazny, S., Berglund, T., Holmes, P., Simmons, I., Wolters, N., DiNicola, S.E., Assanmal Peláez, L., and L’Heureux Lewis-McCoy. (2026). *Evaluation of the Networks for School Improvement Initiative—How Network Hubs Develop and Support Continuous Improvement Networks*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA4409-1.html

Herman, R., Gare, M.S., K., Max, J., **Bush-Mecenas, S.,** Stein, L.B., Johnson, M., & Gonzalez, N. (2026). *Evaluation of Networks for School Improvement: Impacts, Implementation, and Lessons for Network-Based Continuous Improvement*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RBA4409-1.html

Gare, Michael S., Ryan C. Eisner, Stephani L. Wrabel, Matthew J. Farmer, Tiffany Berglund, Damon Blair, Jonathan Schweig, and **Susan Bush-Mecenas** (2026). *Evaluation of the Networks for School Improvement Initiative: Networks, Coaching, and the Implementation of Continuous Improvement in Schools*. Washington DC: American Institutes for Research. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2026-04/Networks-School-Improvement-Eval-Gates-Networks-Coaching-Implementation-April-2026.pdf>

Masters, B., Wange, E., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.,** Wolfe, R.L., & Doan, S. (2026). *What State Education Agency Leaders Want from Federal Technical Assistance*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/t/rra4822-1>

Bush-Mecenas, S., Doan, S., Todd, I., Diliberti, M., Covelli, L., Lee, S., & Okuda-Lim, Z. (2025). *Building State Capacity and Strategies to Promote High-Quality Instructional Materials Implementation and Outcomes of the High-Quality Instructional Materials and Professional Development Network*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA3948-1.html

Lee, J.C., Nguyen, P., Kramer, J.W., **Bush-Mecenas, S.,** Christianson, K., Leigh, E.W., Karam, R.T., Jo, M., & Sahoo, S.K. (2026) *Evaluation of Texas’s Student Success Acceleration Program 2.0: Implementation, Early Outcomes, and Lessons for Continuous Improvement*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. <https://www.rand.org/t/rra4445-2>

Gable, A., Alvarez, C., **Bush-Mecenas, S.,** & Schweig, J. (2025). *Learning Creates Australia Connecting Practice to Evidence*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RRA1100/RRA1139-2/RAND_RRA1139-2.pdf

Bush-Mecenas, S., Herman, R., Gare, M., Stein, L., Johnson, M. & Jeffrey Max (2024). *Evaluation of the Networks for School Improvement Initiative: Interim Summary Report*. Washington D.C.: American Institutes for Research. <https://www.air.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/NSI-Evaluation-Interim-Summary-Report-April-2024.pdf>.

- Barnes-Proby, D., **Bush-Mecenas, S.**, Blagg, T.L., Doss, C.J., Pane, J.F., & J. Jeffries (2024). *Expanding the Village of Support Through Virtual Mentoring: Evaluation of the U.S. Dream Academy Mentoring Program*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3442-1.html.
- Herman, R., Christianson, K., Nguyen, P., **Bush-Mecenas, S.**, Moini, J. S., DiNicola, S. E., ... & L'Heureux Lewis McCoy, S. Z. (2024). *Evaluation of the Networks for School Improvement Initiative: Intermediaries and Networks Interim Report*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR242-1.html
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Woo, A., Wrabel, S., Lee, S., & Kim, B. (2023). *Building Organizational and Individual Capacities in State and Local Education Agencies: The First Five Years of the Center for Improving Social and Emotional Learning and School Safety*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1161-2.html.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Bandana-Gomez, H, Gates, S., & Barnes-Proby, D. (2022). Education and Child Welfare System Efforts to Promote Better Educational Outcomes for Youth in Foster Care: Identifying Opportunities to Enhance Cross-System Collaboration. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2373-1.html.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Schweig, J., and Opfer, V.D. (2022). *Learning Creates Australia: Evaluation of the Learner's Journey Social Lab*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1139-1.html.
- Wrabel, S., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, and Woo, A. (2021). *Seeking balance in the provision of technical assistance: Insights from the National Center to Improve Social Emotional Learning and School Safety*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1161-1.html.
- Day-Hess, C., Clements, D., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, & Coburn, C. (2020). Examining PITCH in the context of prek-3: Student mathematics performance. [Report]. Stanford, CA: Stanford-SFUSD Partnership.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Coburn, C., & Borsato, G. (2019). Addressing fade out and the opportunity gap: Early implementation of SFUSD's PITCH Initiative. [Report]. Stanford, CA: Stanford-SFUSD Partnership.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Coburn, C., & Borsato, G. (2019). Understanding teachers' perspectives on early PITCH implementation: Initial report of COHERE survey findings. [Report]. Stanford, CA: Stanford-SFUSD Partnership.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** (2019). "Helping us to help each other improve": CCEE partnership research implementation report. [Report]. Sacramento, CA: California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE).
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** (2018). Initial CCEE partnership research implementation report. [Report]. Sacramento, CA: California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE).

- Aguilar, J., Nayfack, M., & **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** (2017). Exploring improvement science in education: Promoting college access in Fresno Unified School District. [Policy Brief]. Stanford, CA: Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE).
- Marsh, J.A., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Strunk, K.O., Lincove, J., & Huguet, A. (2017). How do schools respond to state policies on teacher evaluation? [Policy Brief]. New Orleans, LA: Education Research Alliance for New Orleans.
- Marsh, J.A., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, & Hough, H. (2016). Local control in action: Learning from the CORE districts' focus on measurement, capacity building, and shared accountability. [Policy Brief]. Stanford, CA: PACE.
- Marsh, J.A., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Hough, H., Park, V., Allbright, T., Hall, M., & Glover, H. (2016). At the forefront of the new accountability era: Early implementation findings from California's CORE waiver districts. [Report]. Stanford, CA: PACE.
- Strunk, K.O., Marsh, J.A., Hashim, A., **Bush, S.C.**, & Weinstein, T. (2012). The efficacy of the LAUSD Public School Choice Initiative for student achievement outcomes. [Occasional Paper]. New York, NY: National Center for the Study of Privatization in Education.
- Bush, S.C.** (2011). Building effective learning environments in continuation high schools. [Issue Brief]. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, John Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.

BOOK CHAPTERS AND REVIEWS

- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** & Marsh, J.A. (2018). The DIVE approach: Using case-ordered meta-matrices and theory-based displays to analyze multiple case study data. In C. Lochmiller (Ed.), *Complementary Research Methods for Educational Leadership and Policy Studies*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Marsh, J.A., & Strunk, K.O. (2016). Portfolio reform in Los Angeles: District implementation successes and challenges. In A. Daly & K. Finnigan (Eds.), *Thinking and acting systemically: Improving school districts under pressure*. Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** & Marsh, J.A. (2014). Review of American School Reform: What Works, What Fails, and Why. [Book Review] In *Teachers College Record*, <http://www.tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentID=17756>

WORKING PAPERS

- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Coburn, C., & Elston, B. (revise and resubmit). Qualities of routines building district coherence and promoting organizational learning.
- Bush-Mecenas, S.C.**, Christianson, K., Prado Tuma, A., Todd, I., Gahlon, G., & Rico, M. (under review). Interorganizational Network Effectiveness and Network Characteristics: A Review of a Decade of Research Literature.

Bush-Mecenas, S.C., Lee, S., &Woo, A. (working paper). Building and Lending Capacity: Integrating organizational conceptualizations of capacity in educational organizations.

Bush-Mecenas, S.C. (working paper) Evaluating Evaluation: Novel Methods to Evaluation Continuous Improvement Efforts in Schools.

Bush-Mecenas, S.C., Huguet, A., Zelazny, S., & Pina, N. (working paper). Cross-Sector Learning and Organizational Negotiation in an Early Childhood/Ed-Tech Design Research Practice Partnership.

Huguet, A., DiNicola, S. & **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** (working paper). Orchestrating Change: How Network Hubs Adapt Capacity Building Supports in Developing Continuous Improvement Networks.

Foley, N.F., Assanmal Pelaez, L., Lewis-McCoy, L., & **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.** (working paper). The importance of equity in continuous improvement work.

Woo, A., **Bush-Mecenas, S.C.,** & Schweig, J. (working paper). Harmonizing Interests: The Role of Institutional Logics in Charter School Growth.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

UCLA School of Education and Information Studies, Los Angeles, CA

Winter 2027 (scheduled)	Evaluation Theory Instructor; PhD elective
Spring 2027 (scheduled)	Program Evaluation Theories and Practices Instructor; Undergraduate elective
Spring 2027 (scheduled)	Variable Topics: Education: PreK–12 Systems and Evaluation Design Instructor; PhD/MA elective

Claremont Graduate University School of Educational Sciences, Claremont, CA

Summer 2025	Advanced Qualitative Research Inquiry II Instructor; PhD core methods course
Summer 2024	Qualitative Research For Urban School Leaders Instructor; PhD core methods course
Spring 2023	Advanced Qualitative Research Inquiry II Instructor; PhD core methods course
Summer 2022	Qualitative Research For Urban School Leaders Instructor; PhD core methods course

Pardee RAND Graduate School, Santa Monica, CA

Spring 2021	Theory and Empirical Research on Anti-Bias Education Instructor; PhD Independent Study course
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Northwestern University, School of Education and Social Policy, Chicago, IL

Fall 2018	HDSP 451: Organizations, Institutions, and Society: Persistence and Change Teaching Assistant with Jeannette Colyvas; PhD seminar on Institutional Theory
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University of Southern California, Rossier School of Education, Los Angeles, CA

- Spring 2015 **EDUC 653: Advanced Qualitative Methods: Logic and Method**
Teaching Assistant with Patricia Burch; PhD course on qualitative analysis
- Fall 2015 **EDUC 522: Challenges in Urban Education: Accountability**
Teaching Assistant with Julie Marsh; EdD course on accountability policy

ADVISEMENT AND COMMITTEES

UCLA (PhD in Education)

- In progress* George Garcia (Co-Advisor)
- In progress* Naomi Stephen (Committee Member)
- In progress* Andres Fernandez Vergara (Committee Member)
- In progress* Mary-Louise Leger (Committee Member)

Pardee RAND Graduate School of Policy Analysis (PhD in Policy Analysis)

- 2026 SoHyun Sabrina Lee, *Exploring Teacher Well-Being in Community Schools: A Phenomenological Inquiry* (Chair)
- 2026 Agnes Wang, *Competency Based Education and Learning Organizations: The Case of the Yungu School* (Committee Member)

Claremont Graduate University School of Education (PhD in Urban Leadership)

- In progress* Robert Smith, *Esports and Gamification in Higher Education* (Co-Chair)
- In progress* Aba Ngissah, *Supporting Black Students in Middle School Mathematics Classrooms* (Chair)
- In progress* Veronica Alvarez, *Distribution of School Counseling Services to Young People in Foster Care* (Chair)
- In progress* Ramisa Chowdhury, *Higher Education Trajectories of Pakistan American Students* (Committee Member)
- 2026 Christian Espinoza, *Immigration Policy, Deportation, and the Educational Experiences of Transnational Students in Mexican Higher Education* (Chair)
- 2026 Jaime Schmelebeck, *What to Expect When You're Expecting to Return to Teaching after Maternity Leave: Uncovering the Intersection of Identities* (Chair)
- 2026 Marcie Jones, *Teaching Between the Lines: How 3rd–5th Grade Teachers Navigate High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM) in Reading for Diverse Readers, Content, and Contexts* (Chair)
- 2026 Elaine Hu, *Teacher Wellbeing and Retention in Dual-Language Elementary Schools* (Chair)
- 2026 Claudia Ramirez, *Teaching History with Cariño: Exploring Teachers' Lived Experiences In Urban High Schools* (Chair)
- 2026 Behrose Foroughi, *How Teachers Learn to USE MTSS for Inclusion* (Committee Member)
- 2025 Gary Pierson, *A Case Study of School Closure in Black Communities* (Chair)
- 2024 La Quirshia Fennell, *Culture and Community: The Importance of Black Spaces in Community College* (Chair)
- 2024 Alexis Thrower, *The High Maintenance Black Girl: Black Female College Students' Experiences with Intraracial Stereotypes* (Chair)

HONORS, FELLOWSHIPS, AWARDS, AND SERVICES

- 2026- **Editorial Board**
New Directions in Evaluation

- 2026 **Program Chair, Organizational Theory Special Interest Group**
American Educational Research Association
- 2025 **Secretary/Treasurer, Organizational Theory Special Interest Group**
American Educational Research Association
- 2024 **Best Paper Award, Districts in Research and Reform Special Interest Group**
American Educational Research Association
- 2021-2023 **Program Co-Chair, Districts in Research and Reform Special Interest Group**
American Educational Research Association
- 2022 **AERA Outstanding Reviewer Award: *Education Evaluation & Policy Analysis***
American Educational Research Association
- 2018 **Order of Arete**
University of Southern California
- 2018 **David L. Clark National Graduate Student Research Seminar**
University Council for Educational Administration and AERA Divisions A & L
- 2017-2018 **Emerging Education Policy Scholars**
Thomas B. Fordham Institute and American Enterprise Institute
- 2017-2018 **Graduate Student Representative**
Dissertation Award Committee, *Politics of Education Association*
- 2017-2018 **Graduate School Final Year Fellowship**
University of Southern California
- 2014-2016 **Senator & Judiciary Committee Member**
Graduate Student Government, University of Southern California
- 2015-2016 **Board Member**
USC Rossier Student Organization, University of Southern California
- 2013-2017 **Provost's Ph.D. Fellowship**
University of Southern California
- 2012-2013 **Executive Board Member, Secretary**
USC Rossier Staff Advisory Council, University of Southern California
- 2003-2007 **Presidential Scholarship**
University of Southern California
- 2003-2007 **National Merit Finalist Scholarship (NMSQT)**
College Board

Ad Hoc Reviewer: *Educational Researcher; American Educational Research Journal; Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis; Educational Administration Quarterly; Journal of Educational Administration; American Journal of Education; Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk; AERA Division L; AERA SIG 73; University of Leuven, Belgium/ KU Leuven Internal Funds: 2025, 2026.*

Professional Organizations: American Educational Research Association, American Evaluation Association, National Network of Education Research Practice Partnerships, Association for Education Finance and Policy

Other Training: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) External Facilitation Trained 2021