

The MILE team is thrilled to announce our newest doctor, Dr. Wanda Debrewer. Dr. Debrewer completed her dissertation defense and hooding ceremony from Morgan State University last week.

Dr. Debrewer's dissertation, "A Case Study: We Out Here!: Black Girls' Lived Experiences in Outdoor Learning," is a groundbreaking celebration of Black Girls' lived experiences in STEM education through outdoor learning. In her work, Dr. Debrewer looks to fill in the research gap by focusing on primary-aged (i.e., 5 to 8 years old) Black Girls' experiences. Dr. Debrewer notes her study, "is one seed in a broader effort to reimagine outdoor learning as a space of joy, justice, and belonging for young Black Girls in urban education." In particular, Dr. Debrewer hopes that her research will be used in the future to develop a toolkit that can be used to design culturally sustaining outdoor learning environments that affirm identity and foster well-being. Dr. Debrewer's theory-building framework of Black Girls' psychosocial experiences in outdoor learning environments has already served to ground key research by MILE faculty and will form a foundation for generations of research to come.



The unique research perspective of Dr. Debrewer comes from her career as a Maryland public school teacher, where she centered her life's work on seeing, amplifying, and expanding on the genius of her students. Dr. Debrewer herself has been an incredible example of the genius of Black women educators, bringing her decades of teaching science and experience to inform and improve research on literacy, equity, and Maryland public education systems.

Dr. Debrewer first joined the MILE team in 2024, managing crucial elements of MILE's statewide review of comprehensive literacy implementation plans. Her thoughtfulness, passion, and deep knowledge of effective instruction were integral to that effort, supporting all Maryland districts. Since then, Dr. Debrewer has supported MILE's work to highlight innovative and equity-focused research through our annual Literacy Research Symposium, mentored and supported teacher candidates becoming advocates for best practices in public education through MILE's Advocates Day, and managed countless other efforts to bring equity-focused and evidence-based practices to Maryland's communities, schools, and teacher preparation programs. Dr. Debrewer continues to bring care, joy, and curiosity to all those who have the privilege to work with her.

Never shying away from a challenge, Dr. Debrewer designed and conducted a rigorous data collection process while navigating personal and professional hurdles, producing field-building and longstanding findings while undergoing medical treatments. Dr. Debrewer defended her dissertation on May 8, 2026, and celebrated her doctoral hooding ceremony with her committee and family on May 9, 2026.