

Q&A with Amanda Peralta

Tell us a little bit about yourself and your educational background.

My name is Amanda Peralta, and I am a Los Angeles (Pasadena) native, and a proud double Trojan. I attended USC both as an undergraduate student (B.A., Social Sciences - Psychology) and doctoral student (Ed.D., Educational Leadership), and I also have a master's degree in Educational Policy and Administration from LMU.

What are some key highlights about your career in education?

My experience and challenges with navigating higher education spaces as a first-generation Latina led me to pursue a decade-long career in K-12 education. As a teacher and instructional leader, my passion was to maximize the quality of education offered to students from historically marginalized backgrounds, to increase their chances of post-K-12 academic success. I worked relentlessly toward achieving this goal by utilizing and promoting a combination of (1) proven traditional teaching methods and (2) strategic education technology use in classrooms. My approach yielded remarkable student outcomes in the districts that I served. This is what motivated me to pivot into a career in the K-12 education technology space, where for the past 5 years I have supported large districts across the U.S. with effectively integrating digital learning tools into their instructional structures.

What inspired you to pursue your research topic?

My personal background, schooling, and work experiences are what inspired me to select my research topic about designing and facilitating edtech professional learning opportunities for K-12 educators to help positively reshape their technology-related pedagogical practices.

What are the most significant insights or findings from your study?

During my action research study I guided one of my edtech colleagues through a reflective process that focused on aligning our edtech professional development (PD) practices with research-based methods proven to be effective at transforming teacher instructional pedagogy. Two of the key findings that I uncovered in my study were (1) the importance of establishing ideal affective conditions for learning (building trust, modeling vulnerability, etc.) when guiding adult learners through transformative learning experiences, and (2) the key role that andragogical moves (such as cognitive structuring and targeted questioning) play in fostering critical reflection in adult learners.

What are your next steps, and how do you hope your research will make an impact?

After conducting this study, I am applying what I learned about adult learning theory and research-based effective edtech PD practices in my current role as a Customer Success Manager at Age of Learning. My goal is to formally share the knowledge I gained from the EDL program with my edtech colleagues - and with my peers in the broader edtech space. I aspire for us to collectively augment our edtech PD design and facilitation practices in such a way that leads to enhanced student edtech use in classrooms within the districts that we serve to help combat the digital use divide in K-12.