

ITLS Assistant Professor Named 2015 Reviewer of the Year | CEHS

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The Journal of the Learning Sciences is the flagship journal in its field, so when it named an Instructional Technology and Learning Sciences assistant professor as its 2015 Early Career Reviewer of the Year, it was a real distinction for both her and her department.

The journal's editors-in-chief said Dr. Deborah Fields went "above and beyond the expected commitment," by advancing the field and mentoring authors.

That doesn't surprise Dr. Andrew Walker, who heads the ITLS department within the Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services at Utah State University. "Dr. Fields is a recognized expert in her area of research, she is a prolific scholar, her work is grounded in and actively informing social learning theory, and she is an accomplished grant writer," he said.

But Fields's expertise goes beyond scholarship. "She is one of those colleagues who treats their graduate students as true peers," Walker said. "It's not unusual to hear about a conference paper writing jam session down at the Crepery, where she and her graduate students are

passing around partially finished manuscripts. This is the sort of activity where they see a model for research in her own writing, but also a model for substantive and supportive feedback."

So what is the award-winning reviewer's advice to people submitting to a peer-reviewed journal?

"Enjoy it," Fields said. "Honestly, I have a love hate relationship with writing articles myself because it's so much work, but usually the reviews I get are good. They make good points. They make the article better."

As a reviewer she was conscious of the advantages and pitfalls of criticism. "It can be hard to take," she said. "But often the argument does need to be fixed." She is careful to phrase the review in a constructive way.

Some other tips from Dr. Fields:

- Start asking others to read your paper early. "Don't get stuck in your own head," she warned. "I'm always trading with friends on my own work."
- Don't wait too long to send an article in, or to at least send an abstract to an editor. "Do your homework, but don't wait too long to get feedback."
- "Don't get discouraged with 'revise and resubmit with major revisions,'" she said. "Just keep plugging away... At the very least it tells you what an external reader can get out of it."
- Know the journal and its audience. Journal editors look at references, so if that journal has published a paper on your topic, include it in your references if you can.
- Understand the value of submitting to a peer-reviewed journal. It pushes the field forward. The stamp of peer review means that readers can trust an article even if it outside their specialty.
- Fields is currently temporary assistant professor, teaching via distance education. She teaches half time, works on her own USU grants, and consults on other research.