

## **Pathways to Literacy and Community with AIM Institute**

Dawn Brookhart, Associate Director of AIM Institute for Learning and Research, joined us on our latest podcast episode to discuss AIM Institute's work towards supporting students who are struggling to learn to read. We asked her about AIM Pathways and the many courses available for educators, and school leadership, to learn about professional development in the space. There are many FREE resources available on their site (linked below), in addition to some upcoming events that educators and researchers can learn practical skills and tips from, to improve their classrooms and students learning retention.

### **Mentioned Resources:**

AIM Pathways: <https://institute.aimpa.org/aim-pathways>

AIM Pathways to Practice Series: <https://institute.aimpa.org/resources/pathways-to-practice>

AIM's Virtual Teaching Techniques Focused on the Language Comprehension Upper Strands of Dr. Hollis Scarborough's Reading Rope:

<https://institute.aimpa.org/resources/virtual-teaching-techniques-webinar-series>

AIM's Research to Practice Symposium:

<https://institute.aimpa.org/programs-research/research-to-practice-symposium>

AIM Access to the Experts Speaker Series:

<https://institute.aimpa.org/professional-training/access-to-experts-series>

### **Listen to this episode wherever you listen to podcasts:**

Spotify: <https://spoti.fi/3i7KnV5>

Apple: <https://apple.co/392dzK5>

Google: <https://bit.ly/38YBLx0>

### **Transcript of the podcast episode:**

**Gabrielle Oates:** Hello everybody and welcome back to the Educating All Learners Alliance podcast. I'm excited today to be speaking with Dawn Brookhart, who is the Associate Director of the AIM Institute for Learning and Research. So Dawn, welcome. Could you first, you know, give us the insight into what AIM Institute does, and you know just share a bit about your team.

**Dawn Brookhart:** Well gabrielle Thank you so much for providing us the opportunity to speak with you today.

Dawn Brookhart: aim Institute, our aim in general is, let me start over again.

Dawn Brookhart: aim is a nonprofit organization committed to literacy instruction that includes two Divisions we have aim Academy, as well as aim Institute for learning and research.

Dawn Brookhart: The Institute is a Center for educational excellence and professional development.

Dawn Brookhart: And really focuses on disseminating to educators, the latest research, technology and best practices in the fields of literacy and language based learning disabilities, such as dyslexia.

Dawn Brookhart: Since our beginning aim Institute has served thousands of educators across the country and the globe and we truly pride ourselves and leading the way in evidence based strategies for student success.

Dawn Brookhart: And, along with that empowering teachers with evidence base knowledge and practice so that they can achieve the best outcomes for all of their students.

Dawn Brookhart: I also think it's very important to mention that aim started with its first division aim academy 15 years ago when our co founders pat Robertson Nancy Blair.

Dawn Brookhart: created a Co educational independent school that was dedicated to providing these extraordinary educational opportunities to children with language based learning differences.

Dawn Brookhart: This Labor of love began because both pat and Nancy had dyslexic daughters, who were need a specially designed instruction based on the actual research and the US in 2016 they started with 24 students.

Dawn Brookhart: Because of their tireless efforts and their innovative approach in advancing the science of reading the Academy now houses more than 385 students in grades, first through 12th.

Dawn Brookhart: And really has become our proof of concept our lab school for the professional development that the institute replicates and disseminates.

Dawn Brookhart: I also want to mention that, in addition to capturing this research based instructional approach that we have in our school.

Dawn Brookhart: aim success is rooted in its partnerships with organizations such as haskins global literacy have.

Dawn Brookhart: This partnership really guided the establishment of the aim ignite Center and I know that's a big acronym ignite stands for implementing global neuroscience initiatives and technology and education.

Dawn Brookhart: Really that initiative began with the first EG lab in a school environment conducting the very first neuroscience research project with the haskins scientists.

Dawn Brookhart: And it's this work that really furthers aim goal aims goal of disseminating these best practices to educators, by providing the latest research based curriculum technology and training.

Gabrielle Oates: that's incredible and of course we're happy to have aim institute as an equal partner and so i'd love to dive even more into.

Gabrielle Oates: Of course, your partnership with paying ignite Center but what are some other ways that the institute furthers the goal of promoting best practices and literacy instruction.

Dawn Brookhart: that's a great question Thank you gabrielle it's the question we're all asking today right with with the pandemic and the challenge of really scaling professional development and providing high quality professional development, to all learners.

Dawn Brookhart: But I will mention that, when we first began in delivering professional development, we, like everyone else was doing so through a stand and deliver model.

Dawn Brookhart: However, we knew that to be successful and scaling professional development at a global level that we would have to use the latest and research, as well as technology.

Dawn Brookhart: So, in June of 2019 we launched aim pathways, which is an interactive digital teacher training platform.

Dawn Brookhart: That houses all of its coursework now think about that, because that was prior a year, almost a year prior to the pandemic, you know the pandemic hit us in March 2020 so.

Dawn Brookhart: In June of 2019 a lot of people were probably thinking, why do we need professional development on a platform and will this work well, a year later, we were saying thank goodness we went in that direction, because it was what everyone was asking for.

Dawn Brookhart: Because the Web based coursework is taken asynchronously.

Dawn Brookhart: All of our learners can access that high quality content 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and most importantly, the content is all aligned to the international dyslexia associations, knowledge and practice standards for teachers of reading.

Dawn Brookhart: We take that a step further, though it's not just the content through this interactive platform which makes it rich and robust.

Dawn Brookhart: We take it to the application phase and that's the differentiator for us at name pathways we really focus on the application of that content.

Dawn Brookhart: Through coaching sessions, and we call these coaching sessions our virtual community of practice sessions, where participants in the platform meet synchronously with aim facilitators are coaches.

Dawn Brookhart: And really focus in on honing their teaching skills so that they can be sure to be successful in the classroom setting with the application of that professional development.

Dawn Brookhart: And we all know, and I can speak as a former public school administrator and teacher, how many times, did I return from professional development.

Dawn Brookhart: Only to be frustrated with not understanding what now I should do in the classroom what does it look like.

Dawn Brookhart: So we really set up our participants to be successful, because we want them to be confident when their professional development has to be applied to that classroom based setting.

Dawn Brookhart: We currently have three courses all mentioned in our in our interactive platform.

Dawn Brookhart: And the fourth course is scheduled to be launched this summer, our first course is our pathways to proficiency reading it is that foundational course grounded in the science of reading.

Dawn Brookhart: And it's designed for those educators we're committed to learning about the connection between reading research and theoretical models, such as the simple view of reading and Dr Hollis Scarborough's reading group.

Dawn Brookhart: Our second course is a companion course and I can't speak enough about this course, about my excitement because, as a former administrator.

Dawn Brookhart: I often found that the bottleneck in the system was the leadership that in order to be really successful in creating that literacy of culture, it really took agents of change.

Dawn Brookhart: Based upon are agents of change with leadership and our second course are campaigning course two pathways to proficient reading is pathways to literacy leadership.

Dawn Brookhart: it's a foundational knowledge course that empowers school administrators, to create an organizational vision for effective literacy instruction.

Dawn Brookhart: and provides all the tools necessary to implement systems based leadership we give them all kinds of wonderful walkthrough tools that they can use as checklist as they're working with teachers.

Dawn Brookhart: In evidence based practice tools and we also help them to understand how to implement an effective mts s model and how to put together an effective literacy plan.

Dawn Brookhart: So we really make our administrators, the rock stars, who can leave that change effectively our third course is really that deeper dive into classroom application.

Dawn Brookhart: it's a focusing it's focusing on providing interventions in tears, two and three of the mts s model and it's called our pathways to structure literacy and practical course the Orton gillingham approach.

Dawn Brookhart: And for me, this was the game changer in education, I will admit, as a former administrator I did a disservice to thousands of educators, or I should say, thousands of educators and students.

Dawn Brookhart: By not understanding the way reading should be taught and it wasn't until I was trained in Orton gillingham that I realized it isn't about a program.

Dawn Brookhart: it's about training teachers and equipping teachers to be prescriptive and diagnostic with their approach.

Dawn Brookhart: And we can't emphasize this enough now more than ever, as we go through this pandemic and so many educators, are asking what do we do now.

Dawn Brookhart: Well it's time to change the broken model that we had from the past of buying these programs and thinking, they were the snake oil.

Dawn Brookhart: it's now time to really diagnose big diagnostic where our students are where they come to us from.

Dawn Brookhart: And then being able to teach them at those individual skill levels so it's going to take really in depth knowledge and methodology to be able to address those learning gaps that exist.

Dawn Brookhart: And I will mention to gabrielle that our last course and we're super excited about this.

Dawn Brookhart: Is our pathways to proficient writing course which will be launched this gym we actually have it out on our website so if anyone is interested in signing up we highly encourage you to do so.

Dawn Brookhart: We had the luxury of working with Dr Charles haynes on this course, so we understand that there is so much to be learned, when it comes to writing.

Dawn Brookhart: And that a lot of our educators out there, often put this to the last of the list because they may not be as comfortable teaching it or may not.

Dawn Brookhart: feel empowered to have the tools, so the course is loaded with all kinds of wonderful tools for educators, including rubrics that they can use with their students.

Gabrielle Oates: Who are amazing, thank you for sharing the different available courses and I appreciate the emphasis on.

Gabrielle Oates: More diagnostic teaching and really emphasizing those leadership skills, because so much of what we do you know if the leadership of an organization aren't encouraging teachers, then students.

Gabrielle Oates: by default may not be as encouraged to develop these skills wholeheartedly and from that diagnostic lunch really emphasizing these different.

Gabrielle Oates: very, very abilities that comes with each student, so thank you for touching on that and I know you obviously mentioned what each course offers, but just to dive even further, what are some of the main thing that people and educators can learn by completing the course.

Dawn Brookhart: Sure let's let's take a little bit deeper dive when we talk about that in terms of the technology that's built into the platform, because I think it's really important to note this isn't your typical click and snooze type of.

Dawn Brookhart: LM s system that we're used to having right when we when we think of professional development.

Dawn Brookhart: The platform really takes our proven methodology that we use within aim academy and the neuroscience research in language and literacy.

Dawn Brookhart: And converts it to research based teacher knowledge and training designed to improve instructional practices and literacy.

Dawn Brookhart: It improves teacher knowledge related to the science of reading with a new way of giving teachers and support they need.

Dawn Brookhart: Through helping them translate the evidence based practices into their classrooms So what does that mean.

Dawn Brookhart: That means that the platform is filled with all kinds of case studies and students simulations that allow teachers to deepen their knowledge.

Dawn Brookhart: Based on the research and actually apply this knowledge to develop that diagnostic and prescriptive ability in real time applications included in coursework exactly what you referred to the importance of having more now than ever.

Dawn Brookhart: And then the other pieces that the learning objects in this platform, and we call them learning objects, we have more than 1000.

Dawn Brookhart: And they're all different types 15 different types of them that users can experience.

Dawn Brookhart: Everything from documents to video lectures surveys interactive exercises and tons of free that I say free teacher resources that they can download and use the very next day in their classes.

Dawn Brookhart: And most importantly, the materials delivered in various modalities that cater to a variety of learning preferences, so we as educators, often tell our teachers.

Dawn Brookhart: differentiate especially administrators, but we actually don't model this very well when we provide professional development.

Dawn Brookhart: The platform is designed to do a very much that and that is, we have a unique logic model that we use throughout the platform learn practice and apply.

Dawn Brookhart: And it's through these various learning objects in the platform.

Dawn Brookhart: That we're actually able to not only start and learn and relearn the content through corrective feedback that's actually built into the platform that we can really make sure.

Dawn Brookhart: That our learners are securing the knowledge and, most importantly, being able to apply that knowledge.

Dawn Brookhart: And again, that application and i'll reiterate comes through not only the application, they have with those classroom simulations within the platform, but they also get to



apply it in this virtual community of practice sessions when they meet with their individualized coaches.

Gabrielle Oates: That is great what we definitely hope people look more into in pathways and use those resources that you mentioned, but kind of looking forward what are some upcoming opportunities that people have if they want to engage with the aim, Community and where can they go to find this information.

Dawn Brookhart: We have a one of a number of wonderful opportunities coming up at aim.

Dawn Brookhart: Very soon we will be having our ninth annual research to practice symposium This is where we gather the leading researchers in the field of literacy each year and we stream the event.

Dawn Brookhart: In case, people are unable to attend the research symposium we actually recorded, so we certainly encourage people to sign up for it and we'll send them the recording.

Dawn Brookhart: This year's event will be held on Monday march 15 coming up very soon and the topic is early literacy screening we're really focused on prevention through early identification and inter intervention and intervention.

Dawn Brookhart: We have wonderful researchers, that will be presenting like Dr needing gab Dr phil NICO paved Dr katz and Dr yaakov.

Dawn Brookhart: pitcher in the moderator is Dr don content from the Florida Center for reading research, I also want to point out that it's free it doesn't cost anything we also have all kinds of continuing ED credits that we give.

Dawn Brookhart: For participants, so if you're thinking you're a teacher and you really like to attend, but you are busy that day, please sign up and we'll send you the recording and then you're eligible for those see your credits as well.

Dawn Brookhart: And in addition to our research symposium we also really focus on bringing other experts to you.

Dawn Brookhart: We have an aim, a number of experts, we bring team through our access to the expert speaker series we had two wonderful experts join us earlier this year, we had Dr Joshi.

Dawn Brookhart: and Barbara Wilson, and our next expert will be Nancy young, who will be presenting on climbing the ladder of reading meeting the needs of all children who climbs slowly and those who weep on April 19.

Dawn Brookhart: there's a nominal fee for participants to sign up on our website, however, if you're one of our current pathways clients we provide the access to the expert speaker series for free to you through the platform.

Dawn Brookhart: And in addition to the experts, we also recognize that it's very important at this time.

Dawn Brookhart: Throughout the pandemic, to provide support across the nation, because these are really unprecedented times for all of us.

Dawn Brookhart: So, as a result, we want it to assist educators and parents and providing evidence based literacy instruction to their students and children.

Dawn Brookhart: So we opened up components of our platform to provide high quality professional development and resources.

Dawn Brookhart: to strive to meet the needs of the students in a remote setting and this really formed the basis of our pathways to practice series which was launched in the spring of 2020.

Dawn Brookhart: So we encourage you to really go to our website to see all of these wonderful free videos and resources that are house their house there that can really help you.

Dawn Brookhart: As a parent or as an educator to meet the needs of your individual child or your students.

Dawn Brookhart: And also, I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the strong partnerships, like the educating all learners alliance that have come about as a result of this pandemic.

Dawn Brookhart: If there's certainly a silver lining for us through the pandemic, it is the amazing network that we've been able to build this partnership.

Dawn Brookhart: of having folks like educating all learners alliance that are out there to meet the needs of all students and I think these are the lessons that we've learned through this pandemic is that.

Dawn Brookhart: We don't have to do it alone that they are they meet these amazing organize are these amazing organ organization to come together.

Dawn Brookhart: to really create these this ecosystem, we call them are ECO solutions that you as educators don't have to worry about doing it individually.

Dawn Brookhart: That you can lean on us through our strong partnerships to help you provide all of the resources necessary to help me help meet the needs of your child in your students.

Dawn Brookhart: And lastly, I also want to mention, we also have a variety of other resources for free on our website.

Dawn Brookhart: Like we did this fall, we did our virtual teaching techniques webinars that focused on the language comprehension upper strands of Dr hall scarborough's reading broke.

Dawn Brookhart: And these webinars not only focused on language comprehension, but they were free and they also included all kinds of wonderful downloadable templates.

Dawn Brookhart: that are available through the G sweet, so if you're an educator and you're able to have that free access, we made it very turnkey for you so that you can bring evidence based practice to your students but do it in a turnkey solution because we did all the hard work for you.

Gabrielle Oates: Thank you so much for sharing and we wholeheartedly agree that connecting with the community of people that we have throughout the past year will lead us to make those true changes the face that you alluded to earlier, well, thank you so much for joining us today don.

Dawn Brookhart: Thank you gabrielle and on behalf of aim Institute and aim Academy, one that we want to thank the educating all learners alliance for all of the tireless efforts that you have put forth.

Dawn Brookhart: And that we really value and recognize you as very much a valued partner of aim Institute and thank you again.

Gabrielle Oates: Well, thank you so much, and for listeners check out all this information that we mentioned on aim Institute, you can go to [institute dot aim pa.org](http://institute.dot.aim.pa.org) for more information.

Gabrielle Oates: yeah.

Dawn Brookhart: Okay.

Dawn Brookhart: Well, sorry a little bit, but you can, if you want to clip it i'm not i'm not offended in the least but Oh, my goodness.

Gabrielle Oates: No, there was.

Gabrielle Oates: Like everybody like or maybe two seconds, but that's the right word that I should direct people to right.

Dawn Brookhart: Yes, and I gave the yes and I gave the other links I added those at the bottom, I did add a bunch of other links that I talked about to make it easier um anything else that you need gabrielle.

Gabrielle Oates: I don't think so I usually add all the resource links in the show notes of the podcast so people can click directly through wherever they're listening.

Gabrielle Oates: But no, I think, well fed oh great.

Dawn Brookhart: Thank you you're too hot.

Dawn Brookhart: I just i'm so glad it's over you know we'd like you to overthink it, you know as you're going through like don't say that or say this but.

Dawn Brookhart: I really I can't Thank you enough for doing this, I think it's a wonderful thing, and we recognize the hard work that goes into these two we've talked about podcasts, but there are a lot of work to pull together and and how many do you do a month, is it.

Gabrielle Oates: Well it's usually one episode a week, sometimes too.

Gabrielle Oates: So yeah but I mean it's great we love to share them and we found people really do enjoy those more shorter form snippets of information so.

Gabrielle Oates: This will be great and i'll definitely let you know when we have it available probably this time next week and then of course we'll tag you on social media and everything like that.

Dawn Brookhart: sounds great well and again, if you want to clip it I won't be offended at all so.

Gabrielle Oates: I like Nathan through and.

Dawn Brookhart: yeah see what you think, and you know if you say don scratch it and do it again that's fine too I i'm fine with that so we're just so grateful to you, thanks for the opportunity.

Gabrielle Oates: Absolutely and i'm excited to see more I plan to listen in on the 15th so.

Dawn Brookhart: Oh God i'm glad well that's exciting when you see these researchers there they're amazing We just have to remind them like bring it down, you know.

Dawn Brookhart: They are they're so brilliant and I remember, Dr hates last year, listening to her and like at one point she lost me I was like Oh, my goodness, like your.

Gabrielle Oates: boss oh man yeah with so.

Dawn Brookhart: It was so up here, so we just keep reminding them think about you know the common person right.

Gabrielle Oates: They don't.

We want to do.

Dawn Brookhart: We want teachers to feel like they can be successful and implementing what you're telling them they shouldn't be doing, especially with the screener so it really has to be turnkey and understand the blue or, though, like oh I just I don't know if I can be successful with it so.

Gabrielle Oates: excited sure yeah.

Dawn Brookhart: So thank you again gabrielle really appreciate it have a wonderful day, and let me know if you need anything else.

Gabrielle Oates: And we will send to you or two more soon.

Dawn Brookhart: sounds good, keep up the amazing work you're doing.

Gabrielle Oates: Thank you.

Gabrielle Oates: Take care everybody bye.