



PennState

## *An Interview with Dr. Rayne Sperling*

*Interviewed by Ms. Ying Wang  
The Pennsylvania State University*

*Dr. Rayne Sperling is an educational psychology professor at the Pennsylvania State University. She is also the Associate Dean for*



*Undergraduate and Graduate Studies at Penn State. Her research examines the measurement and promotion of learners' self-regulation including their motivation, metacognition, and strategic processing.*

*Her work also addresses effective instructional manipulations, in both traditional and technology-rich environments, that are designed to promote learners' self-regulation, comprehension, decision-making, and problem solving.*

*Much of her work addresses issues of objective-based student assessment, construct measurement, and evaluation. She has served in editorial and guest editorial*

*roles for several journals and handbooks.*

***You have been an active member in the Studying and Self-Regulated Learning SIG for a long time. Would you share your service experience with the SIG?***

I have been a member of the SIG since maybe 1989, if not, it was 1990. I was the newsletter editor in 1991 for the SIG when I was a graduate student. The SIG was called Studying and Self-Directed Learning then. I guess that means I have been with the SIG for about 30 years! I have often served as a reviewer, a session chair, and a discussant and had the opportunity to be the initial Chair of the Graduate Student Mentoring program. In recent years, I have been most involved with the mentoring efforts of the SIG. In addition to the SIG, I have been a member of the Motivation SIG, and a member of the Teaching of Educational Psychology SIG. I also am an active member of Division C and served for many years in the graduate student and faculty mentoring programs. I also served as a Section chair and Division C Program Chair, among other roles. I am also an active member of APA Division 15 as well as member of Divisions 2 and 16. I currently am the Membership Chair for Division 15—Join Division 15!

I became a member of the SIG because of Kenneth Kiewra and Nelson DuBois. Many of the current SIG members were also members then. I distinctly remember an early business meeting

with Nelson and Ken and Dick Staley, Dan Robinson, Linda Bol, Barry Zimmerman, and Phil Winne. It was fun and exciting to be a member of the SIG as a graduate student and early career professional. It is also fun to see the successes of those who joined after me as they have made such significant contributions to the field. It is an amazing community.

***Your research has focused on self-regulated learning and metacognition. How did you develop your research interests when you were a student? What would you consider as a highlight in your research?***

I became really interested in metacognition and strategy use when I was an undergraduate. I started working with Nelson DuBois at Oneonta. He gave me space in his huge office area and a desk, as if I had my own little lab space. I came in every day and acted like it was my job when I was an undergraduate for my junior and senior years. The project that Nelson had me do for my undergraduate thesis was really interesting and so helpful. I was considering graduate school and he wanted to make sure that I had strong foundational knowledge of educational psychology.

We took the top five journals and I abstracted the last five years of articles with a comprehensive coding system. As one would suspect knowing Nelson, it was a huge matrix including authors,

topics, theories, methods, measures, analytic strategies, implications, and suggestions for future research. I think one of the rows was actually where the authors were from because I was looking for graduate schools. I then wrote a big theme paper about trends in the field, what was hot methodology, and who was studying what. It was really fun. I learned so much about the literature. It also solidified my desire to go to graduate school.

While in my 'lab' at Oneonta, I started doing some scoring work for notetaking studies. One result was a late author spot on a Journal of Educational Psychology publication that SIG members Kenneth Kiewra and Steve Benton included me on given my scoring efforts. After Oneonta, I headed to Nebraska to work with Ken to continue to study notetaking and other strategies. Later, I became interested in metacognition and reading and then started working with Greg Schraw and Roger Bruning. Nebraska was a great place to be.

Therefore, I started researching metacognition and self-regulated learning as an undergraduate and then graduate student. I continue to follow those lines of research. Some work I have been doing is with constructs rooted in early work at Oneonta and Nebraska. Some of the contributions are instrument pieces that were used in those early studies such as the MAI, the Jr. MAI, the SRLTAS, and the ERMAS. I also have a history of correlational and experimental studies, including

intervention work that I have done with college students and P-12 learners.

***You have been involved with multiple projects related to SRL, what are the current projects that you have been working on?***

My current projects are all related to self-regulated learning and metacognition, and most involve technology. One project we refer to as the Nudge project. The focus of this work is to develop, build, and test an app that scaffolds students' learning, monitoring, and strategy use. Another project, AvenuePM, is an OSEP founded project with Simon Hooper and Susan Rose that aims at monitoring deaf and hard of hearing learners' reading and literacy skills. SIG member, John Nietfeld and I also are working on Missions with Monty. In this NSF-funded project, we focus on fifth grade students' reading comprehension, metacognitive monitoring and strategy use while they learn NGSS concepts through a game environment. I also participate with another NSF funded project with the College of Science at Penn State. The focus of this project is to work with faculty members as they support students' metacognition and SRL strategy use.

***You have worked with several prolific and renowned researchers. Who would you***

### *consider the most influential to you?*

I have had so many amazing mentors and colleagues. Obviously, work with Greg Schraw certainly was critical to my professional development. Before him, working with Nelson DuBois, and Kenneth Kiewra on strategies was really important. That is how I got introduced to the SIG. Of course, Phil Winne would be someone that has had important influence on my career, especially with technology support and thinking about how to use technology for SRL, which is a big part of my current research agenda. Additional influences certainly are my students through the years and my colleagues like John who keep pushing my thinking.

### *Finally, what would be your advice for graduate students?*

First, read a lot. Read foundational pieces. Read a lot. I think that it is really important to recognize the interplay among elements of SRL. Specifically, the role of conditional knowledge and metacognition generally plays in effective strategy use and how motivation can also drive effective SRL. Domain knowledge plays such an essential role that cannot be underestimated, but sometimes is not attended to quite enough. Students can only understand and think deeply about SRL if they read a lot.

Second, I also think that getting involved in the community is important. Being involved with the SRL SIG, AERA,

APA, and other conference communities is important.

I think that these communities are helpful because there is so much you learn from your colleagues. You gain different perspectives than just your advisors' or maybe your cohort



members. I think if one comes out of a particular lab, he or she may have a particular perception of SRL, but there is much to learn across different labs and different people's approaches.

I also would really encourage students to specifically get involved in the mentoring programs for the SIG, AERA, and APA. These programs provide an opportunity to get feedback about your thinking.

I would encourage graduate students to enjoy the work. It is supposed to be fun in a lot of ways. It shouldn't be stressful. What else is more exciting than learning about how learners think and behave?

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