

**Developing an instrument to improve teacher candidate implementation of equitable
practices in classrooms**

June 2021-May 2022

A'ame Joslin, PhD

Lawrence J. Ruich, PhD

CAEP Coordinator
Clinical Assistant Professor
ajoslin@iu.edu

Special Education Coordinator
Clinical Assistant Professor
lruich@iu.edu

Division of Education, IUPUC
4601 Central Avenue, CC155
Columbus, IN 47201
Phone: 812-348-7235
FAX: 812-348-7235

Statement of support from the department chair or school dean by e-mail to Linda Houser (lhouser@iupui.edu) - as a separate file not included in the proposal. (from Division Head, Jenny Conner)

Simple budget : A detailed budget is not necessary. Nevertheless, please include a brief paragraph/details indicating how you intend to spend the grant money.

IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval is not required for the proposal, but must be obtained prior to transfer of funds if the proposal is selected.

Abstract

Well-designed measures that advance understanding of learners, families, and community result in positive outcomes beyond staid assessments of academic objectives. Learners are direct recipients of these measures, yet benchmarks that identify equity-centered and inclusive practices fall short of accreditation indicators. This proposal aims to enrich equitable practices demonstrated by candidates attending a teacher preparation program in the Division of Education at IUPUC. Data from key stakeholders necessitates involvement of learners and families to augment candidate skill sets with the intention of creating an instrument for schools of education and in-service teachers to advance sustained equitable relationships with learners and families.

Project Description

Purpose

The Division of Education at IUPUC promotes teachers to become equity-centered and inclusive. Our program engages candidates with two courses dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion using an anti-racism and critical consciousness lens to teaching (Gorski & Pothini, 2015; Lee, 2009; Love, 2019; Milner, Cunningham, Delale-O'Connor & Kestenberg, 2019). Throughout their program, candidates participate in practices that include UDL, cultivating learner agency, incorporating families into the learning community, and building relationships in the field. Despite the infusion of these practices, candidates continually demonstrate scores below expectancy on criteria related to equitable practices in and outside the classroom.

In their K-6 field settings, candidates are assessed on the impact they make on educational performance. Measurements of mastery are determined if learners meet the academic outcomes designed by candidate's unit plans and lesson delivery. Candidate proficiencies are determined by Faculty, University Supervisors, and Supervising Teachers. Even though learners are the direct recipients of these measures, they nor their families inform the planning process. As demonstrated by low scores on Benchmarks that measure the understanding of the learner inclusive of fostering a reciprocal relationship with families, it is evident that direct input from these groups would advance the measures outlined in our Teacher Education Program.

Our Division partners with three Advisory Boards to inform the program. Each group set involves Principals, Teachers, and Community Members. Each group champions the value of sustaining relationships with learners, their families, and the community -an essential component to advance learning. Furthermore, measuring the impact of family and teacher-community partnerships on children's educational performance has been an area of interest in the teaching

profession (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013; O'Donnell & Kirkner, 2014). As a means to address this gap, this project will develop an instrument to measure teacher candidate effectiveness pertaining to their efforts in sustaining relationships with families. It will serve as a proto-type for both schools of education and evaluative surveys for in-service teachers.

Initial efforts with the Advisory Boards produced a compilation of questions to survey learners and their families about their sense of belonging, feelings of inclusivity, and their experience and involvement with co-creating an equitable environment. This project aims to elicit input from families and their children on the types of questions that would highlight equity, inclusion, and belonging by creating welcoming learning environments.

Developing and implementing this instrument serves four goals:

1. It alerts candidates to the necessity of creating welcoming learning environments, self-assessing bias, and enacting inclusionary and equitable practices of engagement by illuminating course content advancing anti-racist practices, critical reflection, and ensuring community engagement through direct assessment of early student teaching.
2. It indicates to both learners and their families that they are an integral part of co-creating an inclusionary and equitable educational space, and that their feedback is relevant to the operation of a school setting. It will measure the impact teachers have on learning and child development by gauging feelings of safety, accessibility, and a sense of self.
3. It will inform programmatic planning and implementation of course content by checking a candidate's impact on learning, and will serve as a measure for accreditation.
4. And finally, the instrument and its implementation will serve as a proto-type for teacher education programs and in-service teachers to measure the impact on learning beyond test scores and value-added measures. It will measure welcoming, inclusive, and equitable practices as contributors to a sense of belonging, thus improving learner development.

This project provides an alternative for assessing a teacher candidate's impact on learning. This instrument will be delivered in classrooms where student teachers have been

assigned at the four-week mark of their placement. Surveys will be sent to parents and caregivers seeking feedback anonymously. Voice-over, multi-lingual, and visual representations of the questions will be available to ensure that all facets of learners and family members of varying educational and cultural-linguistic backgrounds participate freely.

Inclusive of compiled data from community stakeholders, learners and their families, partnership will begin with the Bartholomew County Consolidated School Corporation (BCSC). This partnership will invite families to earn a small stipend for their participation in focus groups. In focus groups conducted virtually, participants will be provided currently suggested survey questions from the Advisory Boards for improvement in language and areas of interest in assessing the environment, equity, and inclusion that children and their families experience.

Intended Outcomes

This project intends to provide an alternative model of assessment to measure teacher impact on student learning by including learners and their families in the instrument process centered on inclusion, equity, and belonging. Furthermore, the Advisory Board questions may not be appropriate for the learners and families due to vast differences among potential participants' educational level, training, and exposure to the research surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion –insider voice is primary. It intends to design a pilot for other schools of education to use in an effort to measure teacher candidate impact on K-6 student learning by examining learner engagement in a welcoming environment for children and their families.

Assessment methods and data analysis

This project provides two areas of assessment. First, learners and their families will support the design of an instrument to assess the welcoming, equitable, and inclusive environments created by student teachers that demonstrate an impact on student learning.

Second, these instruments will be delivered to learners and their families at the four-week mark of student teaching and the results of those assessments will inform program improvement.

Assessment of the instrument itself will include gathering the Advisory Boards and learners and their families to evaluate the results of the assessment, implementation practices, and feedback from learners and their families as collected by the instrument. Modifications may be made at this time before utilizing the instrument for the second round. Therefore, assessment will occur of the instrument itself and also the responses from learners and families regarding their sense of belonging in the classroom to inform candidate impact on student learning and thus improve the teacher education program.

Once a designed survey is approved, it will serve as an alternative model of assessment to measure impact on student learning centering on inclusion, equity, and belonging. Data collection will include methods such as the analysis of initial key stakeholder surveys, learner plus family questionnaires and, focus group discussions/interviews. Results from the collection and analyses of this data will provide important feedback for program improvement (e.g., evaluation instrument) as well as information on program impact.

Distribution of a designed survey will be delivered in an online format to each of the learners and their caregivers in the classrooms where Student Teachers are placed during the 2021-2022 school year. Surveys will be filled out anonymously seeking both qualitative and quantitative responses. Modifications pertinent to grade level and provisions to offset any cultural-linguistic barriers will be addressed to ensure that even the youngest members of the community participate. It will be delivered four weeks into the student teacher's placement during class time and via email, class dojo and other communication apps used by the individual teachers. All responses will be anonymous, however demographic information will be collected

and disaggregated to identify trends among racialized, ethnic, linguistic, or gender groups and will be analyzed across all placements supporting student teachers. Methods outlined by Nassar-McMillan and Borders (2002) inform this approach to utilize caregiver/parent focus groups in survey item development.

The findings from this assessment will provide feedback on the methods of classroom engagement and family inclusion provided within the current program. Feedback from learners and their families will provide insight into the gaps in the teacher preparation program by identifying the specific instructional strategies that are/not building equitable spaces for learning.

Dissemination of results

Results from the pilot survey in FA21 will be evaluated by each of the stakeholder groups and disseminated among them for further feedback and improvement to the instrument and implementation before the second round in SP22. Results of both the development of the instrument with stakeholders as well as the results of the survey itself will be shared through written reports to PRAC and the IUPUC community via Zoom presentation accessible to local stakeholders in the BCSC community and IUPUC region. Submission to national associations including Association for Teacher Educators (ATE) and AACTE will be pursued as will sharing results with CAEP for accreditation purposes. Manuscripts of the project will be submitted to the *Journal of Teacher Education* and *Teacher Education and Special Education*.

Budget

| Funding item | Justification | Amount Requested |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Honorariums for families (10 families) | Input from families to design the instrument is the foundation of this proposal and supporting their involvement with financial means will likely impact the inclusion of families from low SES backgrounds who are often excluded from participating in schools and school functions | 10X \$75 = \$750 |
| Summer stipend for principal investigators (2) | Developing this instrument will require time to invite participants for the focus groups, facilitate focus groups, and meet regularly with advisory boards to develop plans for implementation of the instrument | 3.5% salary(\$1820) X 2 = \$3640 |
| Total Requested | | \$4390 |

References

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- Lee, E. (2009). Taking multicultural, anti-racist education seriously: An interview with Enid Lee. in Au. W. (Ed.), *Rethinking Multicultural Education: Teaching for racial and cultural justice* (pp. 9-15). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools.
- Love, Bettina L. 2019. *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Nassar-McMillan, S. C., & Borders, L. D. (2002). Use of focus groups in survey item development. *The Qualitative Report*, 7(1), 1-12.
- O'Donnell, J., & Kirkner, S. L. (2014). The impact of a collaborative family involvement program on latino families and children's educational performance. *School Community Journal*, 24(1), 211-234.

Appendix A: Sample Questions from Advisory Boards

Learner assessment Likert scale and text boxes for comments and/or smiley faces and audio recordings:

1. My teacher makes me feel safe.
2. My teacher treats everyone in the class fairly.
3. My teacher helps me learn.
4. My teacher treats me just like all the other kids in the classroom.
5. My teacher likes me.
6. My teacher makes me feel welcome.
7. I like my teacher.
8. My teacher thinks I can learn.

Family assessment Likert scale and text boxes for comments and/or and audio recordings:

1. My child's teacher includes me in the planning for lessons.
2. My child's teacher informs me of the classroom activities.
3. My child's teacher believes my child can learn.
4. My child's teacher treats all the children in the classroom fairly.
5. My child's teacher listens to me.
6. My child's teacher cares about my child.
7. My child's teacher likes my child.