

## Program Review and Assessment Committee Grant Proposal

1. Project Director
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7. Project Title: African American Female Elementary Pre-Service Teachers and Their Thinking About Engagement
8. Project Dates: January 2009-December 2009
9. Project Checklist
  - a. A letter of support will be written and signed by Dr. Joy Seybold, Chair of Secondary Education
  - b. Budget:

Description	Expense Amount	Total
Summer salary to provide project director to complete analysis	1700.00	1700.00
Conference travel/registration for project directors	800.00	800.00

This proposal describes an assessment project aimed at describing and analyzing the thinking of African American females enrolled in Block II of the School of Education (SOE) Elementary program. This project will examine African American female students' performance on Benchmark II and their E343 (Mathematics in the Elementary School) class engagement project. From Benchmark II, I will specifically focus on students' self-assessment of their engagement with their focus child. The purpose of this project is to build a model of how students think about their engagement with the community and school, their focus child within their field placement, and their Block II cohort.

## **PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT**

This project will add to our understanding of how African American females enrolled in the SOE Elementary Education program think about their interactions with the community and school, children, and their cohort. Specifically, the results of this study will provide a model of how African American female students think about their (1) engagement with the community and school, (2) focus child within their field placement, and (3) Block II cohort. This study will provide a model of students understanding around Principle of Teacher Education Five. This principle addresses *the ability of teachers to value and teach about diversity, to recognize the impact of social, cultural, economic, and political systems on daily school life, and to capitalize on the potential of school to minimize inequities*. Even though this study will specifically focus on African American females, this model of thinking may serve as the foundation for understanding how all School of Education candidates think about engagement.

## **INTENDED OUTCOMES**

The analysis of students thinking around their interactions with the community and school will provide insight into how these students develop an understanding of the community and school of their field placement and what they expect to learn and contribute to the community and school. Students' engagement with their focus child will provide an understanding of how they prepare for and carry out interactions with children, identify areas of development and growth, and their ability to critique and share their experience of engagement with others. Engagement with the cohort will illuminate: (1) how these students view the norms, (2) values and beliefs, (3) academics events and dispositions of the cohort, (4) emotional and social events of the cohort, (5) how they position themselves within the cohort, and (6) how they have engagement with others in the cohort.

Funding from PRAC will support the analysis of benchmark II and/or classroom engagement project data of African American female students in the Elementary Education program. This data will be used to describe a model African American female students' thinking around engagement with the community and school, their focus child, and their cohort. The funding from the grant will also support a publication and presentation around the results of these analyses.

## **ASSESSMENT METHODS**

The data sources for this study are The Elementary Education Block II benchmark and E343 Engagement Project. The Elementary Education Block II Benchmark is a performance task project evaluating students' ability to analyze a child's conceptual

knowledge and use that knowledge to design appropriate instruction. As a part of Benchmark II, students complete a self-assessment of their engagement with their focus child. Students complete Benchmark II at the end of their second semester of the elementary education program.

The E343 Engagement Project was created to give students the opportunity to interact with others as a means to learn about themselves and how they can contribute to the learning of others. Students are asked to develop a perspective of themselves as a learners and contributors as they explore and build their knowledge about (1) a community and the school it serves, (2) their focus child, and (3) their cohort in the context of their university engagement. At each level the student produces documents which are combined to provide a representation of their perspective on engagement.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative methods allow the researcher to understand how people construct meaning (Glesne, 2006). In addition, qualitative methods permit an examination and understanding of a phenomenon in depth. It sheds light on understanding in a way that increases knowledge about a particular story (Patton, 2002). In this study, qualitative methods will give the researcher the opportunity to understand how African American female elementary pre-service teachers understand engagement with the community and school, their focus child, and their cohort.

The data from Benchmark II and E343 Engagement Project will be analyzed using qualitative analyses methods during the summer of 2009. The qualitative analysis will begin with the identification of themes and patterns. Common themes and patterns

will be used to construct a description of the students' thinking as it relates to engagement. If follow up information is needed after the analysis of student work, interviews will be schedule to gather more qualitative data.

## **EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS**

A final written report will be submitted to PRAC at the end of the 2009 fall semester. Products of the assessment will be presented at the Benjamin Banneker Association National Conference and submitted for publication in the Journal of Urban Mathematics Education.

## **DETAILS ON INTENDED USE OF FINDINGS AND IMPROVEMENT**

The main purpose of this study is to assess African American female's pre-service teacher thinking about their engagement with the community and school, their focus child, and the community in order to build a model of their thinking. This model of thinking could provide an avenue for assessing students understanding around PTE five. Findings will be brought to the faculty for discussion and action. In addition, if analyses reveal common weakness in students' ability to articulate their thinking around engagement or common negative experiences among African American females these findings will be brought to the attention of the faculty for discussion and action.

### References

- Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming a Qualitative Researcher: An Introduction* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston, MA.: Allyn and Bacon.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.