

## **Mellon Evidence-Based Learning Grant Proposal**

EDUC 214: Reimagining Youth: Exploring the Role of Family, Community, and Society  
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### **Project Description**

One of the main goals of *Reimagining Youth: Exploring the Role of Family, Community, and Society*, is to understand children and youth beyond the typical analyses of school-based behavior and achievement and to view their experiences more holistically through the interactions and influences of family and community. It seems critical that students in the course have opportunities to learn about the role that families and communities play in shaping, supporting, and influencing children. While the analysis of course texts remains important, I have also found that community-based experiences and field experiences add an important dimension of learning as well.

There are challenges in bringing students into local communities to support course-based learning. In this 200-level course which enrolls 24 students, it is difficult to arrange transportation for a group of this size. The costs of transportation into the city can also be prohibitive, and to make connections to community members in Boston and Cambridge (the focus of the course is on urban schools and traditionally marginalized communities) often requires extra time for travel, making it challenging to schedule within a scheduled course block. The lack of lunch times and community time periods in the new schedule also creates less flexibility to arrange field trips across time blocks.

Recognizing both the benefits of providing community-based experiences for students in EDUC 214 as well as the logistical challenges, I propose to invite community members to the Wellesley campus to join us for a series of class sessions to share their experience and insight on related course topics. These guest speakers, or *community educators* would provide students in EDUC 214 with perspectives that could enhance what they learn in course texts and discussion.

Last fall, when I taught EDUC 214 for the first time, I used a small grant from the Mellon Evidence-Based Learning Project to pilot the partnership with community educators. The experience was a positive one, and in their assessment of the class visit with community educators, students reported learning experiences such as this response from a student: "I felt like the time with First Teacher parents just took my understanding of the theory and the research to a completely different level. I could hear the themes of what we read in their stories, but it was powerful to be able to experience and understand their leadership and advocacy for their children."

### **Research Evidence**

There is a growing body of literature that promotes, in particular, the use of community teachers in teacher education programs. Rooted in the premise that teachers should

understand the communities within which schools are embedded and that shape their students' day-to-day lives, teacher education programs are creating programs and courses that are taught by community teachers, parent and community leaders who can provide perspective to students in the program and who offer a unique community knowledge base that even university faculty may not possess. Some examples of this literature include:

- Hyland, N. E., and Meacham, S. (2004). "Community Knowledge-Centered Teacher Education: A Paradigm for Socially Just Educational Transformation. In J. L. Kincheloe, A. Bursytn, and S.R. Steinberg (Eds.), *Teaching Teachers: Building a Quality School of Urban Education*. New York: Peter Lang.
- McDonald, M. A., Bowman, M., and Brayko, K. (2013). "Learning To See Students: Opportunities to Develop Relational Practices of Teaching Through Community-Based Placements in Teacher Education." *Teachers College Record*.
- Murrell, P. C., Jr. (2001). *The Community Teacher: A New Framework for Effective Urban Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Zeichner, K., Payne, K.A., and Brayko, K. (2014). "Democratizing Teacher Education," *Journal of Teacher Education*.
- Zeichner, K., Bowman, M. Guillen, L., and Napolitan, K. (2016). "Engaging and Working in Solidarity with Local Communities in Preparing the Teachers of Their Children," *Journal of Teacher Education*.

## **Assessment**

I proposed to assess the effectiveness of the role of community educators by seeking the views and perspectives of students. After students have experienced the series of community educators, I will ask them to complete an assignment in which they reflect on and analyze the interactions with community educators. I will ask them to explain and distinguish how the learning that occurred with community educators was enhanced by, supplemented, or complemented our reading and discussion of course texts and course concepts.

## **Course Information**

This proposal seeks support for EDUC 214: Reimagining Youth: Exploring the Role of Family, Community, and Society. I taught the class for the first time in Fall 2018 and am currently teaching the course in Fall 2019. The course typically enrolls about 24 students.