Raising the Bar: High Leverage Practices in Early Literacy Methods Coursework

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Cato College of Education
University of North Carolina Charlotte
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Grant Proposal
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Abstract: In 2019, the edTPA portfolio-based assessment will be required for teacher licensure in the state of North Carolina. At present, data indicate that approximately 19.7% of UNC Charlotte elementary education graduates would not be licensed on the first attempt. The licensure tests currently required will remain, and data from 2015-2017 reports only 70% of elementary education graduates passed the NC Foundations of Reading exam on the first attempt. Therefore, the objective of this research project is to investigate how the integration of selected high leverage practices (HLPs) (Ball & Forzani, 2009, 2010, 2011) in one initial licensure literacy methods course impacts 1) students' preparedness to take the NC Foundations of Reading licensure exam; 2) students' preparedness to pass the edTPA portfolio-based assessment; and 3) the pedagogical transfer of HLPs in their clinical teaching demonstrations, both immediately and over time. Using a concurrent triangulation mixed methods design (Creswell, 2003), the HLPs course modification of the literacy methods course will be implemented in one half of the Fall 2018 sections, with the other half of the Fall 2018 sections serving as the control. Assessment, interview, and video data will be collected and analyzed from all participants to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Budget Request for SOTL Grant January 2018-June 2019

Joint Proposal?	X Yes No
Title of Project	Raising the Bar: High Leverage Practices in Early Literacy Methods Coursework
Duration of Project	August 2018-June 2019
Primary Investigator(s)	Dr. Colleen E. Whittingham & Dr. Paola Pilonieta
Email Address(es)	Cwhitti8@uncc.edu; pilonieta@uncc.edu
UNC Charlotte SOTL Grants Previously Received (please names of project, PIs, and dates)	PIs: Paola Pilonieta and Jean Vintinner; Project Title: Preparing Preservice Teachers to Teach Literacy: Restructuring the Reading Courses of the Elementary Education Program; Date: 2015-2016

Allocate operating budget to Department of

Reading and Elementary Education

		Year Two		
Account #	Award	July to June		
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15	\$ -7700.00		
911250	Graduate Student Salaries \$-112			
911300	Special Pay (Faculty on UNCC payroll other than Grantee)			
915000	Student Temporary Wages			
915900	Non-student Temporary Wages			
920000	Honorarium (Individual(s) not with UNCC)	\$-500.00		
921150	Participant Stipends \$			
925000	Travel - Domestic			
926000	Travel - Foreign \$ -22			
928000	Communication and/or Printing			
930000	Supplies			
942000	Computing Equipment			
944000	Educational Equipment			
951000	Other Current Services			
	Year Two Total	\$ - 12965.00		
	GRAND TOTAL (Year One + Year Two)	\$ - 12965.00		

Attachments:

1.	Attach/provide a	narrative that e	explains how	the funds red	quested will be use

2. Has funding for the project been requested from other sources? ___ Yes __x_ No. If yes, list sources.

Budget Narrative

Faculty Stipend (\$7700)

The faculty stipend will provide financial support to Drs. Whittingham and Pilonieta for Summer 2019. This summer salary will be used to analyze data collected during the 2018-2019 school year, to write a manuscript to be submitted to *Teaching and Teacher Education*, and to prepare to present their study at AERA's 2019 annual conference.

Graduate Student Salaries (\$1125)

It is anticipated that data collection will yield approximately 72 hours of video data and 72 individual interview transcripts. The budget includes a graduate student salary of \$1125. This would allow the PIs to pay a graduate student for 60 hours at \$18.75 (the current rate for graduate students in the College of Education) to assist with video cataloging and coding, and interview transcription.

Non-UNCC Honorarium (\$500)

To assure the validity of all qualitative results, interrater reliability will be established when coding the teacher candidates' video recordings of their teaching demonstrations. Dr. Emily Brown Hoffman of Ball State University will apply the coding scheme developed by Dr. Whittingham and Dr. Pilonieta to a subset of the video data to determine interrater reliability. Because Dr. Hoffman is not associated with UNC Charlotte, she will not know the students nor the specific contexts/classrooms in which they teach, therefore having no knowledge of which study participants were in the control or the redesign sections. This step will provide an additional objective perspective to the qualitative data analysis, increasing the validity of the study results.

Participant Stipends (\$1440)

Fall enrollment in READ 3224/5200 typically yields four sections of 24 students each. If 75% of the 96 students agree to participate in the research, the study will yield 72 student participants. We request a participant stipend of \$1440 to provide each student participant with a \$10 Amazon or Target gift card for each semester of participation, as is common practice to thank them for their participation. Students will participate in the Fall 2018 semester when enrolled in READ 3224/5200 and the following semester when enrolled in READ 3226/5300.

Travel: Foreign (\$2200)

The budget includes \$2200 for foreign travel to support the dissemination of this research, as the American Educational Research Association's 2019 Annual Meeting will be held in Toronto, Canada.



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October 16, 2017

The purpose of this letter is to endorse the proposal created by Dr. Colleen Whittingham and Dr. Paola Pilonieta for a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning grant titled *Raising the Bar: High Leverage Practices in Early Literacy Methods Coursework*. Of all the letters I have written for the SOTL competition this year, this one is perhaps the most important. Their proposed work is exceptionally thought-through, and it is essential for the preparation and licensure of teachers. We have an urgent need to increase our students' licensure pass rates on the exams mentioned below, and this proposed work will increase that likelihood in a significant way.

In order to gain licensure, the state of North Carolina currently requires elementary education teacher candidates to pass the Foundations of Reading exam, and will require candidates to pass edTPA starting in 2019. Currently, the UNCC pass rate for the Foundations of Reading exam is approximately 70%, and the pass rate for edTPA is approximately 80%, based on the presumed 'cut scores' the state will require. These pass rates indicate a need to review the preparation of our students.

The project proposed by Dr. Whittingham and Dr. Pilonieta will provide a comprehensive revision to READ 3224 and READ 5200 – the required early literacy course in the Elementary Education undergraduate and graduate certificate programs, respectively. The project's initiatives will positively impact students' performance on these licensure requirements and will improve instruction in our teacher candidate's future classrooms. Additionally, this work coincides with the Cato College of Education's revision efforts to incorporate high leverage practices in all of its programs.

Dr. Whittingham is highly qualified to lead the activities of this grant. all of which will be supported by Dr. Pilonieta, an experienced professor in the program. As a first-year assistant professor, Whittingham joined the UNCC faculty this fall having already served as the Primary Investigator on three research projects as a graduate student. She has published and presented her work widely, and I am confident that the methodological and theoretical rigor she and Dr. Pilonieta will bring to this project will yield results useful to their department and the College as a whole.

I strongly support the receipt of this grant by Dr. Whittingham and Dr. Pilonieta. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Ellen McIntyre

Ellen Mchityse

Dean

Project Narrative

Overall Aims & Objectives

This research will investigate how the integration of selected High Leverage Practices (Ball & Forzani, 2009, 2010, 2011) in one undergraduate/graduate certificate literacy methods course impacts students' preparedness to pass high-stakes teaching licensure assessments, and the transfer of pedagogical practices to students' teaching. Using a concurrent triangulation mixed methods design (Creswell, 2009), the READ 3224/5200 HLPs course redesign will be implemented in two of the four Fall 2018 sections, with the remaining two Fall 2018 sections serving as the control. This allows for comparison between the redesigned class and the traditional class to determine whether the specified aims were met. Participating students' assessments, interviews, and video data of clinical teaching demonstrations will be collected and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

Specific Research Questions to be Addressed

Comparing data from students in the modified sections of READ 3224/5200 with those in the control sections will answer: Does the READ 3224/5200 redesign positively impact students': 1) preparedness to pass the Foundations of Reading licensure exam?, 2) preparedness to complete and pass the edTPA assessment?, and 3) pedagogical transfer of high leverage teaching practices to their clinical teaching demonstrations, in the current and subsequent semesters?

Proposed Project Rationale & Impact

Implementation of the READ 3224/5200 Redesign has the potential to concurrently increase the number of UNC Charlotte preservice teachers who pass the Foundations of Reading licensing exam (Foundations exam) and improve the quality of their classroom practices upon

graduation. Passing the Foundations exam is a high-stakes, costly event for students, as each subtest costs \$155. Students incur a total fee of \$310 per attempt. Similarly, the need to resubmit an edTPA portfolio if the assessment is not passed on the first attempt is a burdensome investment of time and money for students.

Most importantly, the READ 3224/5200 Redesign will allow students to observe, practice, and reflect on HLPs known to be effective in elementary classrooms. By modeling the use of HLPs at the college level, and explicitly defining and sharing video examples of what these practices 'look like' in an elementary setting, the Redesign concurrently prepares students to pass high-stakes assessments while modeling important pedagogical knowledge. This research provides a unique opportunity to impact the educational achievement of our preservice teachers, and the educational achievement of Charlotte's students for years to come.

This preparedness for pedagogical excellence ultimately impacts the greater Charlotte region, as better prepared teachers yield higher achieving students. "Putting a quality teacher in every classroom is key to addressing the challenges of reading achievement in schools," (International Reading Association, 2007, p.1). Improving the quality of this reading course will better prepare our preservice teachers. Early-career teachers who are prepared for the challenges of diverse classroom needs experience lower instances of burn out and tend to remain in the classroom longer (Johnson, Kardos, Kauffman, Liu, & Donaldson, 2004). Over time, our graduates will be able to positively impact student reading achievement through decreasing the likelihood of teacher turnover and subsequently providing students with the benefit to students of having a highly experienced classroom teacher, by decreasing the likelihood of teacher turn over (Ronfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). The program may then enjoy the added benefit of an

improved value-added score on the UNC Educator Quality Dashboard Program Effectiveness Report (UNC General Administration, 2015).

Literature Review

Early Elementary Education and Economic Mobility

Charlotte ranks 50th of the United States' 50 largest metropolitan areas in terms of intergenerational economic mobility (Chetty, Hendren, Kline, & Saez, 2014). Charlottean children born into poverty are unlikely to achieve the financial security that also alluded their parents. The poorest city residents tend to remain so, and this lack of mobility is even more localized among minoritized populations. However, the likelihood of upward economic mobility is increased for children who have access to early childhood educational opportunities (Barnett, Belfield, Montie, Nores, Scheweihart, & Xiang, 2005), specifically those meeting the needs of diverse learners (Genishi & Dyson, 2015). One of the most critical components of a strong educational program is knowledgeable, capable educators (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000). In fact, a recent review of research conducted by READ Charlotte (an initiative founded by the Belk Foundation to improve local third grade reading scores), found the most significant gains in children's reading achievement resulted from investments in teacher's professional development, adding 12.2 months of additional growth over an academic year (READ Charlotte, 2017).

Early Elementary Teacher Preparedness

And yet, data gathered from recent UNC Charlotte graduates indicates elementary education candidates are more effective in teaching reading to children in grades 3-5 versus Kindergarten through grade 2, as 23.41% of Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) students with UNC Charlotte elementary education graduates as teachers did not meet growth goals in K-2. When asked about their preparedness by the Cato College of Education Deans (August 2017)

report), candidates perceived that they needed: 1) opportunities to practice what they learned, 2) more preparation on differentiating instruction for diverse populations, and 3) more practice with classroom management.

To better prepare our teacher candidates to successfully meet the needs of their students, we must investigate the core set of teaching practices that are directly related to teacher quality. Specifically, in recent years the University of Michigan's TeachingWorks taskforce (Ball & Forzani, 2009; 2010; 2011) sought to identify and define these core practices, and their resulting review of the extant research resulted in nineteen HLPs. Each HLP has several key features. The practice "occurs frequently in teaching, can be enacted across curriculum, is something that beginning teachers can work to master, ... and has the potential to improve student achievement as a research-based practice" (Stanulis, Little & Wibbens, 2012, p.34). Of the identified practices, three are of particular relevance to early literacy learning contexts for diverse learners: facilitating a group discussion, setting up and managing small group work, and eliciting and interpreting individual students' thinking.

High Leverage Practices

Facilitating a group discussion is the first HLP the READ 3224/5200 redesign will explicitly teach and intentionally model for teacher candidates. The TeachingWorks (2017) institute at the University of Michigan states:

The purposes of a discussion are to build collective knowledge and capability in relation to specific instructional goals and to allow students to practice listening, speaking, and interpreting. The teacher and a wide range of students contribute orally, listen actively, and respond to and learn from others' contributions (HLP 1).

Well-facilitated discussions simultaneously allow learners to see that building knowledge does not happen in isolation, but in collaboration with others (Palinscar & Herrenkohl, 2002), and allows student learners to engage in a classroom community where collaboration is expected, fostering student respect and tolerance for alternative viewpoints (Matsumara, Slater, & Crosson, 2008).

Setting up and managing small group work is the second HLP of focus, and is described by TeachingWorks as follows:

Teachers use small group work when instructional goals call for in-depth interaction among students and in order to teach students to work collaboratively. To use groups effectively, teachers choose tasks that require and foster collaborative work, issue clear directions that permit groups to work semi-independently, and implement mechanisms for holding students accountable for both collective and individual learning. They use their own time strategically, deliberately choosing which groups to work with, when, and on what (HLP 9).

This HLP addresses candidates perceived needs for additional preparation to work with diverse student populations, and is an example of a pedagogical practice that positively impact classroom management. Conversations about student grouping and student accountability naturally align with management decisions.

The third HLP of interest is *eliciting and interpreting individual students' thinking*. This practice is described by TeachingWorks as follows:

Teachers pose questions or tasks that provoke or allow students to share their thinking about specific academic content in order to evaluate student understanding, guide instructional decisions, and surface ideas that will benefit other students. To do this

effectively, a teacher draws out a student's thinking through carefully-chosen questions and tasks and considers and checks alternative interpretations of the student's ideas and methods (HLP 3).

These 'carefully-chosen questions' are a source of formative assessment data, from which teachers make future instructional decisions (Gotwals & Birmingham, 2016). Therefore, explicit instruction in this HLP will improve students' preparedness to complete and pass Task 3 of the edTPA assessment, which requires them to assess and provide feedback to students.

Deliberate Practices as Method of Delivery

Viewed separately and in combination with one another, research supports the utility of explicit instruction in and modeling of the selected HLPs at the initial licensure level as indicative of future classroom success. While HLPs could be introduced to students using traditional delivery models such as lecture, typical approaches to teacher preparation and professional development historically result in inconsistent teacher effectiveness (Birman, et. Al., 2007; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2005). Instead, the READ 3224/5200 redesign is grounded in the principles of deliberate practice (Deans for Impact, 2016) to maximize student outcomes. Deliberate practice is "practice that is purposeful and designed to maximize improvement" (Deans for Impact, 2016, p. 2). The features of deliberate practice, such as working toward well-defined specific goals, and receiving and responding to high-quality feedback, are research-based principles designed to improve teaching and learning.

Methods

Because the effectiveness of the READ 3224/5200 Redesign will be determined using both qualitative and quantitative measures, a concurrent triangulation mixed methods design (Creswell, 2008) will be used. Dr. Whittingham and Dr. Pilonieta will each teach two sections of

READ 3224/5200 during the Fall 2018 semester. Each professor will teach one course using the Redesign Model (RM) and one course using the Original Model (OM). This structure will eliminate variation in teaching style as a potential variable. All students in all sections will participate fully in course instruction, discussion, and assignments. Only data from those students who agree to serve as research participants will be analyzed for research purposes. During the second week of the semester, Dr. Whittingham will attend the first 15 minutes of both of Dr. Pilonieta's sections to recruit participants, and vice versa, per IRB regulations regarding recruitment coercion. Similarly, Dr. Whittingham will conduct the follow up interviews with Dr. Pilonieta's students, and vice versa.

Participants

Study participants enrolled in READ 3224 will include approximately 72-75 undergraduate elementary education majors, most in their junior year of coursework. Participants enrolled in READ 5200, approximately 24 students, are graduate certificate students seeking their initial teaching licensure through coursework. Study participants will complete either the OM or the RM requirements for READ 3224/5200, including course readings, discussions, and assignments.

Where the READ 3224/5200 OM follows a traditional education methods course design – assigning a primary textbook with supplemental readings and primarily reliant on lecture as the delivery method, the READ 3224/5200 RM incorporates the tenets of deliberate practice-based learning (Deans for Impact, 2016) to achieve the identified educational outcomes.

Evaluation

The final exam administered in all four sections was developed using sample questions from the NC Foundations practice exam. Therefore, student performance on these exams is

indicative of their potential performance on the NC Foundations exam. To determine the effect of the READ 3224/5200 Redesign on students' preparedness for the NC Foundations exam, we will use basic statistical analysis to compare the mean of all participating OM students and all participating RM students on both assessments.

The final clinical teaching demonstration assigned in all four sections will be assessed using a combination of edTPA rubrics. To determine the effect of the READ 3224/5200 Redesign on students' preparedness for the edTPA portfolio assessment, we will use basic statistical analysis to compare the means of all participating OM students to all participating RM students on the relevant rubrics. Additionally, clinical teaching demonstration videos submitted by study participants in both OM and RM sections will be qualitatively coded (Saldana, 2015), using a codebook developed by the PIs in accordance with the features of the HLPs observable in video. To eliminate researcher bias, Dr. Pilonieta will code Dr. Whittingham's students' videos and vice versa, as neither professor will know which of their colleague's students received the OM or the RM.

A similar analysis will be conducted the following semester, when students take READ 3226/5300. Participating students will be asked to record their clinical teaching demonstration assignment. These videos will be analyzed by Dr. Pilonieta and Dr. Whittingham for research purposes; their evaluation of the videos will not impact students' grades for READ 3226/5300. Videos submitted by study participants will be assigned a numeric score on edTPA rubrics, and will be qualitatively coded using the code book developed the prior semester. Again, Dr. Pilonieta will analyze Dr. Whittingham's student videos, and vice versa. An outside reviewer will be employed to determine interrater reliability on all qualitative matrices. Findings from

this dataset will inform our understanding of the pedagogical transfer of teaching practices learned in READ 3224/5200 over time.

Lastly, the PIs will interview participating students using the same semi-structured interview protocol (Spradley, 2015) for students in the OM and RM sections. This interview will investigate students' perceptions of their preparedness to take and pass the edTPA, the NC Reading Foundations licensing exam, and their perceptions of preparedness to apply what the learned in the course to their future K-2 classrooms. We acknowledge the limitation of this interview as obtaining perceived readiness, as candidates will not yet be employed as practicing teachers, but it is beyond the scope of this project to follow participants longitudinally. However, further studies could continue to investigate the longer-term effects of the READ 3224/5200 redesign as funding and participant willingness allow.

Knowledge Dissemination

Research findings will be shared with the Cato College of Education faculty, specifically those who teach undergraduate courses informally at department meetings as applicable. The results will also be shared with universities across the state through the North Carolina Association for Colleges and Teacher Educators 2019 Spring Forum. Additionally, the PIs will present their preliminary findings at the American Educational Research Association's 2019 Annual Meeting and will prepare a manuscript for publication in *Teaching and Teacher Education* to disseminate findings with the field more broadly.

Human Subjects

If this application is granted, the authors will submit an IRB application in the spring of 2018 to begin the study in the fall of 2018.

Extramural Funding

There is no immediate plan to seek extramural funding. However, dependent upon the results of the preliminary study, a longitudinal design may be a logical next step.

Proposed Study Timeline					
2018	July	Finalize IRB requirements			
	August	Students are enrolled in READ 3224/5200; each PI teaches one Redesign and one Control			
	September	Each PI recruits participants from their colleague's section			
	October	Teach READ 3224/5200 according to Redesign and Control curriculums			
	November	Gather participant data: Videos of teaching demonstrations			
	December	Gather participant data: Final Exam assessments			
	January	Students are enrolled in READ 3226/5300			
2019	February	Gather participant data: Semi-structured Interviews			
	March	Data analysis: Videos, Exams, Interviews			
	April	Gather Participant Data: Video of teaching demonstrations			
	May	Data analysis: Videos from READ 3226			
	June	Prepare findings for dissemination: presentations and publication			
	July	Prepare findings for dissemination: presentations and publication			

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