

**Examining the Impact of an Embedded, Multi-Semester Internship on Teacher Education  
Candidates' Knowledge and Skills**

Submitted to the UNC Charlotte Scholarship for Teaching and Learning Grants Program

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**Abstract:**

Within the current educational context, teacher preparation programs are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their effectiveness in producing teachers that impact P-12 student learning. As a result, programs must investigate organizational features that are powerful for preparing preservice candidates to enter the classroom. This research will examine how an embedded internship delivered in within partnership with a local district over multiple semesters can be used to support the development of teacher candidates. It is theorized that the activities associated with this proposal have the potential for the partnership to be a powerful way to structure teacher learning to impact theory to practice connections and improve efficacy for teaching and learning. Resulting conclusions will be utilized to examine coursework and clinical experiences within the teacher education programs within the Department of Reading and Elementary Education and to engage in revisions to the various facets of the program that maximize candidates' preparation entering the teaching field.

**Budget Request for SOTL Grant**  
**Year 2017-2018**

Joint Proposal?             Yes      X   No

Title of Project      Examining the Impact of an Embedded, Multi-Semester Internship on Teacher Education Candidates' Knowledge and Skills

Duration of Project    January 15, 2018 to June 15, 2019

Primary Investigator(s) Michael Putman

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UNC Charlotte SOTL Grants Previously Received (please names of project, PIs, and dates)      Measuring Efficacy for Culturally Responsive Classroom Management, PI: Michael Putman, Dates: January 15, 2012 – Dec. 31, 2012

Allocate operating budget to Department of      Reading and Elementary Education

		<b>Year One</b>
<b>Account #</b>	<b>Award</b>	<b>January to June 2018</b>
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15	
911250	Graduate Student Salaries	
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)	\$2,000
921150	Participant Stipends	
925000	Travel - Domestic	\$100
926000	Travel - Foreign	
928000	Communication and/or Printing	\$200
930000	Supplies	\$100
942000	Computing Equipment	
944000	Educational Equipment	
951000	Other Current Services	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 2,400</b>

		<b>Year Two</b>
<b>Account #</b>	<b>Award</b>	<b>July, 2018, to June, 2019</b>
Faculty Stipend	Transferred directly from Academic Affairs to Grantee on May 15	
911250	Graduate Student Salaries	
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)	\$2,000
921150	Participant Stipends	\$1,000
925000	Travel - Domestic	\$600
926000	Travel - Foreign	
928000	Communication and/or Printing	
930000	Supplies	
942000	Computing Equipment	
944000	Educational Equipment	
951000	Other Current Services	
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 3,600</b>

**Attachments:**

1. Attach/provide a narrative that explains how the funds requested will be used.
2. Has funding for the project been requested from other sources? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_**X** No. If yes, list sources.

Budget Narrative

A two-year budget of \$6,000 is requested to conduct the activities associated with this grant. Funds will be used for four purposes: 1) honorariums for teachers from the participating school district, 2) stipends for the student participants, 3) travel by the principal investigator and faculty to school sites, and 4) materials, supplies, and services associated with the research endeavors described in the proposal.

*Honorariums*

Twenty teachers participating in the activities associated with this proposal will be paid two \$100 honorariums. The first will be paid for participation in a one-day meeting in June, 2018. This meeting will be

focused on joint planning of processes and candidate support for implementing high leverage teaching practices (in collaboration with UNC Charlotte faculty), discussions of expectations for activities to be completed during clinical experiences, and training on components of artifacts (e.g., edTPA) required of candidates for assessment purposes. The second honorarium will be paid during Year 2 to compensate the teachers for additional requirements associated with supervision of the candidates during the school year and to participate in debrief sessions in the spring semester and concluding in May, 2018. The honorarium will total \$4,000 over the duration of the grant (20 @ \$100 each semester).

### *Participant Stipends*

Participants in the proposed program will incur expenses associated with travel to and from Kannapolis at least two days per week for instruction and to participate within field experiences during the first semester of the Year-Long Internship. At the end of the spring semester, participants will also be asked to complete a survey and participate in a focus group interview assessing their perspectives and experiences. Upon completion of the interview and submission of the survey, the twenty participants will each receive a \$50 stipend, which will be provided as a gift card. The total amount requested for participant stipends is \$1,000 (20 @ \$50).

### *Travel*

This proposal allocates \$700 to compensate for the travel costs of the principal investigator (PI) and faculty members to Kannapolis. This figure represents approximately 32 trips to Kannapolis (40 miles round-trip @ \$0.535/mi). It is anticipated that 3-5 visits by the PI will be necessary during the planning phase of the activities in Year 1. During Year 2, two faculty members will travel to Kannapolis each week for 10 weeks (20 visits) for onsite teaching activities. The PI will travel once per week for five weeks during the first semester for observations of instruction and a minimum of once per month during the second semester to interview candidates and conference with teachers. Any travel expenses incurred over the \$700 will be reimbursed using department funds allocated to the faculty member for travel.

### *Materials, Supplies, and Resources*

To carry out the activities associated with teacher training, \$300 has been allocated to purchase materials and supplies and for copy expenses. Resources, such as paper and other office supplies, will be necessary to create the copies of the materials that will be distributed for the meeting and training in June, 2018, thus a portion of the budget has been directed towards purchasing these supplies. In addition, funding is allocated for printing services that will be necessary to create the copies of the materials prior to distribution.

## Letter of Support



October 19, 2017

The purpose of this letter is to endorse the proposal created by Dr. Michael Putman for a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning grant titled *Examining the Impact of an Embedded, Multi-Semester Internship on Teacher Education Candidates' Knowledge and Skills*.

The proposed activities are well-aligned with the ongoing work in the Cato College of Education to create systematic clinical experiences grounded in strong local partnerships. For example, in the proposal, there are deliberate efforts to engage faculty and clinical educators in Kannapolis City Schools in developing agreed upon methods to introduce high leverage practices. The consistency and coherence inherent within this process will more effectively facilitate candidates' knowledge development through the coordination of information received in methods courses with the demonstration of these practices within the classroom by clinical educator and faculty. Furthermore, this will allow candidates to receive multiple levels of support through feedback and guidance from university faculty and school personnel as the candidates seek to implement these practices within their teaching.

The project proposed by Dr. Putman is also firmly grounded in the research that acknowledges the need for candidates to have opportunities to establish and build upon foundational knowledge and principles gained through coursework within their teaching experiences. Notably, in completing field experiences while concurrently engaged in coursework in the context of practice, there is an opportunity to extend what is currently known about how teacher candidates' understanding of theory and its connections to practice. The resulting conclusions will assist the College and department in developing candidates who are effective in the classroom and who are able to support P-12 students' learning.

Dr. Putman is highly qualified to lead the activities of this grant. As the Department Chair, the proposed work aligns with the vision Dr. Putman articulated within his three-year plan and is supported through his ongoing leadership. Dr. Putman has been awarded a previous SOTL grant as well as an FRG grant, which resulted in several published articles. I am confident that the methodological and theoretical rigor associated with this project will yield results useful to Department of Reading and Elementary Education and be of interest to other teacher educators across the state and nation.

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ellen McIntyre".

Dean, Cato College of Education

## Project Narrative

This purpose of this project is to examine the impact of an embedded, multi-semester internship incorporating a university-district partnership on teacher candidates' knowledge and skills. Specifically, the proposal seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- Develop enhanced clinical experiences and support mechanisms for teacher education candidates through the creation of a systematic, authentic partnership between the Department of Reading and Elementary Education and Kannapolis City Schools (KCS);
- Provide extended opportunities for teacher education candidates to observe and teach directly within a context of practice; and
- Improve candidates' capacity to connect theory and practice.

The proposed embedded practice/partnership model has the potential to significantly alter the current preparation model used within the department, while simultaneously developing and improving candidate performance in the classroom. The research questions guiding the inquiry include:

1. How does an embedded, multi-semester internship offered within a university-district partnership impact candidates' ability to connect theoretical constructs to practical application in the classroom? (RQ1)
2. What is the effect on edTPA performance of candidates participating in an embedded, multi-semester internship offered within university-district partnership in comparison to candidates completing the traditional year-long internship? (RQ2)

### *Rationale*

In the traditional model of the Year-Long Internship within Department of Reading and Elementary Education (REEL), candidates spend one semester completing coursework on the



university campus and engaging in clinical experiences at a designated school where they will student teach in the following semester. In this model, there has been a noted lack of cohesion between information presented in university coursework and practices observed in the classroom and little coordination between university faculty and classroom teachers. This is an oft-cited criticism of teacher education, in general, but it provides the impetus to develop a new approach to preparing our teacher education candidates – one that seeks to address identified gaps in the current clinical model using the collective expertise of faculty and teachers as they work in concert with the best evidence available on effective practices for clinical placements. Subsequently, resulting programmatic revisions based on the conclusions of this research address experts’ calls (see McDonald, Kazemi, & Kavanagh, 2013) to examine features of pathways to teaching, including the where, when, and how teacher preparation is structured, that maximize benefits to candidates.

### **Literature Review**

Given the “unprecedented attention to teacher preparation/certification and the policies...that govern them and measure their effectiveness” (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015, p. 10), it is important to consider the features of teacher education programs that contribute to the development of high quality teachers. These include:

- a clear vision of effective teaching, grounded in established theories of effective pedagogy (Capraro, Capraro, & Helfeldt, 2010);
- a strong curriculum implemented in systematic, coordinated experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2006);
- opportunities to engage in extended clinical experiences in authentic contexts (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005);

- strong coherence between practices observed in clinical experiences and information presented in coursework (Allsop, DeMarie, Alvarez-McHatton, & Doone, 2006); and
- strong relationships between school-partners and university-based faculty (Darling-Hammond, 2006)

Each feature has its own unique benefit that is magnified when multiple elements are present in a program. Yet, enacting a curriculum that incorporates the aforementioned characteristics has proven challenging due to a variety of factors, including policy mandates and contrasts between universities' and clinical partners' views of teaching and learning (Knight et al., 2015). As teacher education programs seek to enact innovations to incorporate these factors, they must take into account different mechanisms for learning, including coursework, field experiences, and informal experiences outside of teacher education. These programs must also direct attention toward the systems and structures that support teacher candidates' development.

### *Integrating Features of Effective Teacher Education*

In their efforts to produce effective teachers, many teacher preparation programs utilize theoretical perspectives to establish a vision for teaching as well as to develop a strong curriculum (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). Yet, a focus on theory and academic language has presented challenges as teacher education candidates move from the university to the classroom as it may not align with the language of practice nor the actions of teachers in schools. Oftentimes, the result has been a feeling of disconnect between what is introduced within academia and what is enacted by practitioners in schools. This has been a longstanding criticism of traditional university-based teacher education (Zeichner, 2010).

As a result, researchers (see Moore, 2003) have recommended developing teaching situations that facilitate the transfer of skills and strategies introduced within university

coursework to the authentic contexts of classrooms. This shift to supporting teaching candidates within the context of an authentic field experience is representative of practice-based teacher education (see McDonald et al., 2013). Field experiences, also commonly referred to as clinical experiences, are foundational to the development of teaching candidates as they engage in opportunities to observe, assist, and instruct in the classroom. Ball & Forzani (2009) argue that teacher educators should focus on implementation of a practice-focused curriculum that would enable candidates to apply their knowledge in the day-to-day tasks of teachers in the context of practice. Importantly, these opportunities should be ongoing as the candidates establish and build upon foundational knowledge and principles gained through coursework within the teaching experiences (Grossman & McDonald, 2008). Research has shown that when field experiences were completed concurrently with coursework, teaching candidates' understanding of theory and its connections to practice were improved (Allen & Wright, 2014; McDonald et al., 2013).

Acknowledging the importance of systematic clinical experiences grounded in strong local partnerships, many universities continue to examine ways to combine coursework with extended internships that occur in structured school-based settings. This includes considering methods to further involve the supervising teacher, modifying the time and location of course offerings to maximize time in the field, and creating course assignments to demonstrate greater applicability to the field experience (Allsopp et al., 2006). In addition to lengthier connections in the field, advantages to these changes include providing teaching candidates with guidance from university faculty as well as school personnel (see Castle, Fox, & O'Hanlan Souder, 2006). The consistency and coherence of presented practices more effectively facilitates the learning candidates receive through instruction in methods courses and through the expertise of practicing teachers.

The benefits of this embedded practice are magnified within extended placements in school-based settings, especially when university professors and teachers have a strong collaborative relationship (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Viewed as “instructional communities of practice” (Supovitz, 2002), collaborative planning and development of a common vision between teacher educators and classroom teachers can produce sites where the emphasis is on shared practices (Wenger, 1998). This allows teacher educators to coordinate and align the information they share in coursework to the teaching practices candidates will observe in schools (Zeichner, 2010). Carefully structuring and scaffolding learning experiences, helping teacher candidates learn in the context of classroom practice, and providing many opportunities for reflection and collaboration with others supports effective learning for candidates (Hammerness et al., 2005).

## **Methods**

### *Participants*

Participants in the research will be 20 teacher education candidates entering their Year-Long Internship (YLI) within the Elementary Education program or Dual (Special Ed./Elementary Ed.) Licensure program during the Fall Semester of 2018. It is anticipated that the sample will consist primarily of females given the demographics of teacher education candidates with these declared majors. Recruitment will take place within the Fall 2017 (prior to the grant timeframe) and Spring 2018 Semesters from among all students eligible for the YLI during the 2018-2019 Academic Year.

### *Procedure*

The research will consist of two phases. Phase I, which will occur during Year 1, will be focused upon developing the partnership between REEL and KCS. Initial activities conducted by the principal investigator (PI) will involve meeting with KCS administrators

to develop organizational details of the partnership, including the selection of mentor teachers, determining candidate placement, and designating locations for the delivery of university coursework in KCS. In June, the PI will facilitate a one-day meeting/training that will involve participating KCS teachers and REEL faculty. The goal of the meeting is to develop shared goals and understandings around pedagogical strategies and principles (e.g., high leverage practices, classroom management) between the stakeholder groups. Furthermore, the groups will discuss the time and location of university course offerings that will be delivered at KCS to maximize candidates' classroom opportunities and to create course assignments that demonstrate greater applicability to the field experience. KCS teachers will also receive training in edTPA at this time to ensure familiarity with the requirements for the teacher education candidates.

Phase II will commence with candidates beginning their YLI placements and coursework. Using a schedule established in Phase I, university classes will be held on location at one KCS school twice per week for a period of 10 weeks. During classes and as part of their clinical requirements, candidates will regularly observe and teach in mentor teachers' classrooms and faculty and teachers will coordinate opportunities for candidates to see practices directly associated with content introduced in coursework in teachers' classrooms. Students will complete their formative (practice) edTPA artifact under the guidance of the university instructor and mentor teacher during the fall semester. Faculty and classroom teachers will continue to meet with the PI to discuss facets of the partnership and necessary modifications to ensure effectiveness within the partnership and continued candidate development. The End of Semester Clinical Placement survey will be administered at the end of the semester.

Candidates will enter student teaching in their mentor teacher's classroom in the spring semester. To maintain the partnership, two faculty members who were instructors in the YLI semester will supervise all candidates and act as liaisons between the department and KCS teachers. Candidates will gradually assume all teaching duties under the guidance and support of the mentor teachers and faculty members and complete their summative edTPA assessment during student teaching. Candidates will receive a summative rating of their performance using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) at the end of the semester. Once per month, the PI will hold meetings between the two supervisors and mentor teachers to debrief regarding components of the partnership and student teaching experiences. Data collection will culminate with the College of Education's Exit Survey and focus group interviews conducted by the PI.

### *Instruments*

EdTPA is a nationally normed and validated portfolio-based assessment developed by the Stanford Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity (SCALE). It requires candidates to prepare artifacts (i.e. lesson plans, videos) and commentaries (justifications of artifacts) related to three key tasks: (a) planning instruction, (b) instructing and engaging students in learning, and (c) assessing student learning. Each task is assessed on a scale from 1 through 5 using five task-specific rubrics. Candidates will complete a formative edTPA assignment, assessed by YLI faculty, and a summative edTPA assignment that is submitted directly to Pearson for external scoring.

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is tool for observing and assessing the effectiveness of interactions among teachers and students in classrooms. It measures the emotional, organizational, and instructional supports provided by teachers that contribute to

children's social, developmental, and academic achievement. Candidates are rated on a scale of 1-7 within domains such as emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support. CLASS will be used as the primary observation instrument within student teaching for all teacher education candidates. Each candidate will be observed and scored with a summative rating at the conclusion of the student teaching semester.

The End of Semester Clinical Placement and Exit surveys are Cato College of Education administered-instruments that collect information about frequency and duration of visits to school sites and the level of interactions and supports the candidates received during their clinical experiences from both UNC Charlotte and supervisors. The interactions and supports are aligned with the established field experiences curriculum. The frequency of the interactions/supports is assessed on a 5-point scale (never, rarely, occasionally, often, always) and the quality of the interactions/supports is assessed on a 5-point scale (completely agree, mostly agree, somewhat agree, agree a little, do not agree at all). Additional open-ended questions access information about candidates' perceptions of their preparation program, including the strengths and weakness of their respective program.

### **Evaluation**

Given the multiple sources of data collected, as articulated within the Methods section, several analytic techniques will be employed to answer the proposed research questions to allow for triangulation of results.

RQ1 will be answered using both quantitative and qualitative data sources. A regression analysis will be conducted to determine the relationship between summative edTPA scores (dependent variable) and several predictor (independent) variables, including formative edTPA scores, candidate perceptions of support (as measured by surveys), and CLASS ratings.

Qualitative data from interviews and open-ended survey questions will be analyzed using the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967), which allows qualitative incidents to be continually evaluated and grouped based on the identification of similarities and differences that can be made within and across responses. For the purposes of this research, open coding of survey responses will be used to note consistent trends within the data regarding preservice candidates' perceptions of support and the connections between information taught within coursework and noted in practice (both observed and enacted). Successive passes will be made through the data and coded data will be organized into patterns. These patterns will be analyzed in comparison to quantitative results to provide broader themes regarding participants' proficiencies in connecting theoretical constructs to practical applications. RQ2 will be answered using a multivariate analysis of variance with edTPA score (formative and summative) representing the dependent variable and group (pilot and traditional) used as the independent variable. Statistical significance for quantitative methods will be established when  $p < .05$ .

### **Knowledge Dissemination**

The conclusions from this research will be disseminated at local, state, and national levels. Notably, it will be shared with faculty from the REEL Dept. and involved personnel from KCS to discuss the results. Furthermore, results will be disseminated to other state and national teacher education programs through presentations at conferences such as NC-ACTE and AACTE, and within manuscripts prepared for teacher education journals, including *Action in Teacher Education*.

### **Human Subjects**

A Human Subjects Protocol application for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) is currently under development. It is anticipated that the form will be completed by early



December. The researcher understands that the activities that are the focus of this proposal cannot begin until IRB approval is granted.

### **Extramural Funding**

No external funding is being sought concurrently with this proposal. However, anticipating the Department of Education's continued funding of projects within the Institute of Education Sciences, activities within this proposal will be used to provide a foundation for a federal application to conduct additional research.

### **Timeline**

<b>Spring 2018</b>	Principal investigator (PI): - meets with faculty and representative from Kannapolis City Schools to develop partnership agreement - recruits participants from students enrolled in the Elementary Education or Dual Licensure programs
<b>Summer 2018</b>	Joint meeting and training of KCS teachers with REEL Faculty members
<b>Fall 2018</b>	Participants begin Year-Long Internship in KCS; Data collection begins; Ongoing meetings between stakeholders
<b>Spring 2019</b>	Participants enter student teaching phase of Year-Long Internship; Ongoing data collection; Ongoing meetings between stakeholders
<b>Summer 2019</b>	PI conducts data analysis and disseminates results

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