Title of Project: Towards a Collaborative Engagement of Educational Theory: Impacting Teacher Education, Community, and Schools

Project Abstract (< 100 words): This project examined connections that preservice teachers make between educational theories and practice, and in-service teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy about working with students from diverse backgrounds. Preservice teachers worked with teachers at Glen Acres Elementary School to provide opportunities for increased family involvement in school activities in an effort to enhance diverse students’ learning environments. Project objectives were: 1) to facilitate education students’ intentional connections between theories taught in education courses and lived realities of students and schools in the community, 2) to increase teacher self-efficacy about working with students from diverse backgrounds, and 3) to provide opportunities for increased family involvement in school activities and encourage connections between school learning and home and community experiences.

Project Personnel: Dr. JoAnn Phillion (PI), Jason Ware, Hannah Sasser, and Megan Hatke (Co-PIs)

1. Describe the partnership created and the methods you used to sustain the partnerships.

Through this project a partnership was established between Purdue University and Glen Acres Elementary School. Megan Hatke, the principal of Glen Acres, has confirmed that she intends to continue the partnership and as agreed to having follow-up interviews with the teachers who participated. Researchers at Purdue intend to continue teaching independent study courses with some of the undergrad preservice teachers who participated in the initial project.

2. Describe the activities you completed this year for your Synergy Grant in relationship to the partners’ strategic plans.

The activities completed for this project were designed to address the Lafayette School Corporation goal of “creating a positive and caring climate – addressing diversity awareness, partnerships with parents/community, and issues that impact student performance.” Activities included: preservice teachers spending time in classroom observations; preservice teachers interviewing in-service teachers and school principal to learn how school personnel define and discuss problems and needs; preservice teachers interviewing students’ parents to learn how parents and community define and discuss problems and needs; and preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and school parents planning and organizing family events at the school.
3. Describe your plans, if any, for continuation, scaling up, and/or institutionalization of the project next year.

Researchers will continue to work with preservice teacher participants at the school during the 2014-15 school year (see #1).

4. Summarize any impact data you have collected on your project, especially impact on P-12 students, teachers, principals, etc.

Data collected are:
Pre-/post-project semi-structured interviews with 36 preservice teacher participants; focus group interview with 6 parents; pre-/post-project focus groups with Glen Acres Elementary School teachers (10) and principal; student reflections, classroom observations, and activity proposals; researcher field notes.

5. Summarize your plan for disseminating the results of your project to state and national audiences.

Once qualitative data analysis is complete, findings from the project will be submitted as articles to leading journals in the field of education, such as Theory into Practice. Conference presentations will be submitted to American Education Research Association (AERA), National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME), and Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice.

6. What suggestions do you have for future Synergy Grant participants or for the project administrators?

We would advise people to thoroughly consider all the necessary resources for the greatest impact with a minimal amount of effort because the project timeframe passes quickly in the midst of all the things one does throughout an academic year.