

Center for Family Supportive Schools and Communities

Proposal Template

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Proposal background or rationale – discuss the relationship of the proposal to Family Supportive Schools & Communities and how the project fits into the CFSS&C model; describe how the project will focus on the ADFS criteria.

The elementary education department has been developing a new teacher education program that features placing interns in clusters in year-long placements in Whatcom and Skagit county schools. A year-long internship will enable our students to get beneath the surface of classroom life and inquire into the process of how it unfolds across the year. They will get to know students and be able to genuinely design learning experiences based upon an assessment of student strengths and learning needs. They will have time to study the school and its community and to investigate curriculum and engage in short and long-term planning. Working with other interns placed with them in clusters, they will engage in a professional learning community in a supportive yet demanding and rigorous environment that will better prepare them for beginning teaching. The first cluster of 6 interns began their internship in spring quarter, 2007. A larger cohort of about 45 interns will begin in fall, 2007.

In designing the first quarter internship course, EIED 470 Developing Teaching, I created an initial assignment titled “The School and Community Assets Inquiry Project.” The purpose of this assignment was to involve interns in investigating their school and its surrounding community, to begin to learn about the families who send their children there, and to take stock of the diverse assets that might be tapped in support of student learning and well-being. My initial thinking about this assignment was inspired by reading Luis Moll’s work on what he and colleagues have called “family funds of knowledge”(Moll, Amanti et al. 1992). From their perspective, teachers and schools can better support children’s learning by becoming aware of the experience, know-how, and diverse capacities of families that might be tapped as sources of support and collaboration around school curriculum. Another inspiration for me came from reading about “community asset mapping,”(Kretzmann and McKnight 1993) an idea developed in the human services field, that takes a similar asset-based perspective toward communities with the deliberate aim of shifting away from the familiar paradigm of seeing minority or low-income communities from a deficit perspective. In addition to these background perspectives, I have more recently encountered ideas about “place-based” education. This is an emerging approach to education that emphasizes drawing upon the unique aspects of particular school communities to help overcome the disjuncture between what happens in school and the actual experiences and local context of the children and families that the school serves (Smith 2002). Each of these approaches promises to lend depth and substance to the family supportive schools principles that seek to re-orient partnerships with parents toward fostering greater input and participation on the part of parents in school decision making and guidance. The assignment overall represents an important effort to inject family-supportive principles into the pre-service teacher education curriculum.

This project will particularly address outcomes and skills associated with AFFS Criteria #3 & 4. Criterion #3 focuses on school activities that are family centered. The assignment under development engages teacher candidates in the following outcomes associated with that criterion:

- Listening to families and students and involving them in classroom planning as appropriate.
- Developing curriculum activities and learning plans that engage students with their parents, families, and community.

It will also help develop the following elements of the desired skill set:

- Ability to partner and collaborate with colleagues in school to accommodate families.
- Ability to create and implement developmentally appropriate activities that engage students and families.

Criterion #4 focuses on how the school is connected to the community. The assignment under development engages teacher candidates in the following outcomes associated with that criterion:

- Working collaboratively with other teachers, counselors, and family advocates to build a network of relationships with other organizations to help their families have better access to services and support in the school and the community.
- Identifying and integrating resources and services from the community to strengthen school programs, family practices, student learning, and healthy development.
- Collaborate with community partners on a regular basis to learn about parent/family needs and opportunities.
- Accessing and effectively using community and school data to determine needs of students and families.

It will also help develop the following elements of the desired skill set:

- Ability to identify, investigate, and network with community resources.
- Ability to integrate community resources into classroom curriculum and activities.
- Ability to identify, read, and analyze community data, i.e. asset mapping, health statistics, Census reports, and Kids Count.

Objective(s):

After piloting this inquiry project with an initial group of interns, and in anticipation of an expanded group of students beginning the internship during fall quarter 2007, I would like to spend time during June and July to do the following:

- further conceptualize the assignment, based upon ideas about “place-based” education
- revise the assignment based upon the initial experience with it and additional conceptualization work
- develop various scaffolding plans to support a larger number of students in connecting more easily with a variety of school communities
- consult with colleagues in the Human Services Department at Woodring College to get assistance in locating community resource persons and agencies that can assist interns in their inquiries

- investigate how to better assist students in accessing various data sources for demographic, employment, and social services information.

Deliverable(s) / Timeline:

By September, 2007, I expect to produce a revised assignment and detailed rubric as described above. This will be available for others to use as they wish.

By September, 2007, I expect to produce a scaffolding handout to accompany the revised assignment that will assist groups of students with strategies for conducting the inquiry. This will be available for others to use as they wish.

By December, 2007, I expect to have a collection of 5-7 sample PowerPoint presentations and related video tape of in class presentations of inquiry projects. Pending student permission, these will also be available for others to use as they wish.

References

Kretzmann, J. P. and J. L. McKnight (1993). Building communities from the inside out: A path toward finding and mobilizing a community's assets. Evanston, Ill, Institute for Policy Research.

Moll, L., C. Amanti, et al. (1992). "Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms." Theory Into Practice **31**(2): 132-141.

Smith, G. A. (2002). "Place-based education." Phi Delta Kappan **83**(8): 584-595.

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Approvals: