Final Proposal 2007

Christa McAuliffe Award for Exemplary Programs
In Teacher Education

Western Carolina University’s Partnership for Performance

Submitted by:

A. Michael Dougherty, Dean
College of Education and Allied Professions
220 Killian Building
Western Carolina University
Cullowhee, North Carolina 28723

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Email: dougherty@email.wcu.edu
Telephone: 828-227-7311
Fax: 828-227-7388
Describe your program, including its mission, goals, structure, etc. Include discussion of how this is a cooperative effort among education, arts and sciences, and P-12 schools.

Western Carolina University has a rich tradition of working as partners with the public schools in its region. The university’s teacher education programs have long been recognized throughout the state as being exemplary and have been designated as such by the North Carolina State Board of Education. In 1997, the College of Education and Allied Professions at Western Carolina University, with its partners in the public schools and the College of Arts and Sciences, developed a formal School University Teacher Education Partnership (SUTEP) in its economically challenged rural setting. Our partnership has formal, signed agreements with 96 schools in 18 school systems in western North Carolina and extends approximately 100 miles east and west of the campus covering 6,500 square miles in rural, mountainous terrain. These agreements set the stage for our program to positively impact our teacher candidates and their subsequent positive impact on P-12 pupil learning.

The increased focus on educational outcomes has led SUTEP to evolve into a Partnership for Performance. We have built an evidence-based culture that uses a data-based assessment system for decision-making. Western’s teacher education programs received national recognition in 2006 when they, along with SUTEP, received the Distinguished Program in Teacher Education Award from the Association of Teacher Educators. Western is recognized as a national leader in forming viable partnerships that make a difference in student learning.

Our partnership’s mission is to improve the academic achievement of P-16 learners through the preparation and support of professional educators by using a continuous improvement process which includes university faculty and partnership schools. We fulfill our mission by supporting the overall mission of our College, which is to create a community of learners guided by knowledge, values and experiences.

The College’s vision is to prepare teacher candidates who are passionate, lifelong learners, who genuinely care about all students, who understand human development, who have a deep knowledge of their disciplines, who have an effective range of instructional skills including a facility with technology, and who expect and support high achievement in their students.

To that end, in our Partnership for Performance, university faculty, public school partners and preservice teachers collaborate toward improving the quality of student learning and professional growth. Our partnership has four primary components: recruitment, preservice education, induction, and professional development. The components provide a seamless process of teacher development from recruitment into the profession through career status.

The focus of this final proposal is on our partnership’s preservice component, the component that works directly with our teacher education program. A preservice committee oversees the operation of this component. Co-chairs, one representing the university and the other representing the public schools, direct the committee’s activities. The preservice committee
addresses issues related to the preparation of candidates and their internship/student teaching experiences. The committee includes university faculty, public school personnel, and teacher education candidates. This continuous improvement structure allows stakeholders to become change agents in our teacher education program.

Activities of the preservice component of our partnership include:
- reviewing the quality of preservice programs with an emphasis on field experiences;
- impacting all of the College’s professional education programs;
- strengthening communications;
- strengthening efforts related to diversity, technology, and action research; and
- involving stakeholders in the process of placing interns.

The preservice component’s goals are generated annually by our partnership’s preservice committee. The components of the goal setting process include initiatives, action agents, performance indicators and results. Goals for 2006-2007 included those related to conducting focus groups with interns and following up with the creation of study groups based on the results of those focus groups, having a candidate exchange with a HBCU, reviewing the secondary education internship seminar, updating of the partnership handbook, providing additional training for cooperating teachers who help to supervise interns, conducting on-site training to cooperating teachers on electronic assessment of candidate performance, providing technology portfolio training for interns, and reviewing teacher work samples.

From its inception, our partnership has been a collaborative effort among the faculty in education, faculty in arts and sciences, and professional educators in P-12 schools. P-12 partners and arts and sciences and education faculty serve at all levels of our partnership governance structure. For example, the membership of the SUTEP steering committee and the four other committees include P-12 partners, faculty from education and faculty from arts and sciences. The Professional Education Council membership (university-wide) also includes P-12 partners, faculty from education and arts and sciences as well as the arts and sciences associate dean. The College of Arts and Sciences Teacher Education Committee includes representation from the College of Education. Finally, public school liaisons serve as a primary contact between the university and partner schools, conduct orientation for student teachers and assist with field placements.

As noted in our initial proposal, professional educators from P-12 schools are actively involved in our partnership in a variety of ways. Partnership school representatives invite candidates completing early field experiences to their classrooms each week. Each semester approximately 400 candidates participate in early field experiences in which they observe teachers, learn about the school settings, and focus on service learning activities including tutoring and other appropriate activities. Prior to the year-long internship in their final year of preparation, university candidates have three field experience placements designed to provide them with diverse school experiences. The majority of our teacher education candidates are placed in one of the 96 partnership schools for one or more field experiences.
Professional educators from P-12 schools serve as clinical faculty by co-teaching education courses with education or arts and sciences faculty. Approximately, fifty P-12 professional educators serve in this capacity annually. Clinical faculty members bring relevant and up-to-date information and experiences about issues currently facing public school teachers and administrators to methods courses, curriculum courses, and internship seminars. The unique perspective of the P-12 practitioner helps to blend theory and practice to make courses that better prepare our candidates.

The student teaching experience is another prime example of our partnership. All stakeholders - university faculty, public school partners, and candidates - have a voice in the placement process. The semester before student teaching, candidates attend a reception to meet representatives from the public schools. Candidates then visit schools and select three sites where they would like to be placed. The Director of Field Experiences and program directors from the colleges of education and arts and sciences review requests and divide candidates by school. Each partnering school interviews candidates and matches them with teachers based on compatibility.

The growth and development of the student teacher is co-supervised by the P-12 cooperating teacher and a faculty member in the College of Education. Secondary education and special subject candidates also have a supervisor in their academic major from the College of Arts and Sciences. Supervision is both formative and summative and the cooperating teacher and supervisor(s) from the university determine grades jointly.

We have expanded our support of faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences to encourage even greater participation in the partnership and to enhance the positive impact of the teacher education program on teacher candidates. The partnership provides incentives for arts and sciences faculty to become involved in P-16 curriculum alignment, study the North Carolina Standard Course of Study, assist public school teachers with special projects, work with teachers in their classrooms on a regular basis, provide professional development activities for teachers, attend subject-specific conferences with their students, and become familiar with Praxis II. For example, twenty faculty members from the College of Arts and Sciences have taken the PRAXIS to gain a perspective of expected content and pedagogy skills. As a result, faculty have revised curriculum to better prepare candidates for the PRAXIS and the classroom. The same opportunities are provided to education faculty to enhance their already substantial involvement in the public schools.

In addition, arts and sciences faculty maintain a valid state teaching license in the teaching area and serve in the following roles: (1) teach general education, content, and methods courses; (2) advise candidates (as primary advisors) and coordinate programs in secondary and K-12 subjects; (3) prepare accreditation and annual assessment reports and serve on accreditation preparation committees; (4) represent the institution regarding teacher education in state and national meetings; (5) participate in searches for teacher education positions; and (6) serve on committees/advisory boards for centers and programs within the College of Education.
In one cooperative activity, faculty members from the two colleges work with P-12 educators in action research projects and grant proposal writing. In our initial proposal, we described how this collaboration has resulted in the award of grants valued over $2,300,000. These grants have greatly impacted the learning of our preservice teachers and of P-12 students in our partnership schools. A few examples include:

- Evaluations of a grant that supported beginning teachers led to curricular revisions in courses involving instruction in reading, more explicit emphasis on classroom management strategies in methods courses, and a class set of graphing calculators for our candidates to use in a high-need school system. Curriculum changes affected courses offered in the College of Arts and Sciences. For example, World Literature in Transition for English BSEd majors now includes opportunities for candidates to teach mock lessons in class.

- As a result of collaborating with P-12 teachers in our Connected Coaching Grant, we have developed stronger instructional strategies in reading. On campus, we have incorporated in our courses many of the insights learned in this grant about teaching literacy, revised a graduate and undergraduate middle grades reading course, and revised differentiated instruction in courses to place more emphasis on the specific skills of diagnostic teaching and on collaborative planning.

- The NC QUEST SCIENCES grant has enhanced P-12 students’ learning through inquiry activities developed collaboratively with P-12 teachers and faculty from both colleges. In addition, online “virtual school” resources are now accessible for public school teachers and our teacher education candidates.

These grants, primarily by their impact on curriculum revision, have significantly impacted our teacher candidate professional programs and the candidates we prepare.

SUTEP itself offers opportunities for teachers in partnership schools to apply for grants for innovative projects that impact student learning. Teachers who are awarded grants from SUTEP partner with a faculty member in education or arts and sciences to implement grant initiatives. Recent partnership school grants included a grant for supporting below average readers which improved reading where 18 of 19 students tested out of Title 1. Another grant enhanced musical learning where students were able to demonstrate their own musical compositions and vocal work with the use of technology tools. A third grant increased interest in poetry where library records showed increases in the number of poetry books checked out, hits on children’s poetry websites, and freely chosen poetry books by children in the classroom for nightly reading. In addition, a grant for a Reading Well increased student interest in reading as well as parental support in one elementary school, while another school innovatively added music to reading activities to stimulate student reading interest which resulted in increased student use of reading and music kits.
Clearly, by working together, members of the partnership constantly assume new roles to positively impact the education of students in P-12 schools in the region. In the remainder of this proposal, we will also demonstrate how Western’s Partnership for Performance helps to prepare our candidates to be professional educators who are successful teaching all students and how their teaching results in high student achievement in P-12 schools. We will also demonstrate how our partnership prepares candidates who are able to assess, plan for, and positively impact all of the students they teach. The proposal focuses on the full spectrum of our teacher education programs including elementary education, middle grades education, special education, physical education, and secondary education.
What evidence do you have of the program’s positive impact on its teacher candidates or in-service teachers?

Teacher education candidates at Western demonstrate significant, positive learning on both internal indicators and external indicators during the preservice teacher education program and later as in-service teachers. Preservice undergraduate teacher education candidates at Western demonstrate significant, positive learning in the various traditional ways including:

- performance in clinical experiences evaluated by cooperating teachers and university supervisors;
- achieving required grade point averages in the teacher education curriculum; and
- successful completion of program requirements such as (1) technology portfolios, (2) evaluations of videotaped teaching, and (3) Teacher Work Samples.

In addition, four external measures of teacher candidates’ learning provide valid indices of candidate learning. First, Praxis II scores are measures of content and pedagogy. The remaining three indices are separate evaluations of performance by candidates, principals, and mentors in first-year teaching performance. These measures are collected outside of the university and constitute accepted measures of candidate learning.

PRAXIS II Scores. Western graduates provide evidence that they are prepared to teach pupils as they begin their professional career. Figure 1 below shows PRAXIS II scores of Western teacher candidates by area from 1999-2000 through 2005-2006. Pass rates have improved or remained stable among the different program areas, especially in Physical Education. North Carolina requires the highest PRAXIS II scores in the nation for teacher licensure in Physical Education.

Figure 1. Western Praxis II Pass Rates, 1999-2000 through 2005-2006.
Notes: NC State Board of Education discontinued requirement for Praxis II for all but elementary and special education in 2003. Averages are not reported for fewer than four test-takers per year.

Figure 2 below indicates the preparedness of our graduates to effectively teach in a classroom. The most recent data indicate that Western has an overall higher pass rate than other North Carolina higher education institutions. All of our Elementary Education graduates passed the PRAXIS II compared with 97 percent of other North Carolina higher education institutions. Secondary education PRAXIS II pass rates are part of the program total in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Western Praxis II Pass Rates Compared to NC Average Pass Rates, 2005-2006.**

![Western Praxis II Pass Rates Compared to NC Average Pass Rates, 2005-2006.](image)

**Performance Ratings of Candidates’ Learning.** Each year the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction surveys new teachers, their principals, and their mentors to ascertain perceptions of the training provided and learning achieved by the new teachers at their preparation institution. The data are collected and made public. Table 1 below shows average ratings for the last seven years including over 300 program completers. The rating scale is one to four with four being the highest rating.

**Table 1. Performance Ratings of Western Beginning Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Component</th>
<th>Program Completers (N=304)</th>
<th>Principals (N=326)</th>
<th>Mentors (N=335)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program in General</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing the Classroom</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Technology as an Instructional Tool</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Content and Delivery</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In summary, the program’s positive impact on teacher candidates’ learning is demonstrated through Praxis II passing rates that exceed state averages and through performance evaluations of inservice program completers by principals, mentors, and the teachers themselves in the first year of teaching. The performance evaluations show average ratings ranging from 3.25 to 3.69.
What evidence do you have of the program graduates’ positive impact on P-12 pupil learning?

Western uses multiple performance assessments providing persuasive and credible evidence that our program graduates positively impact P-12 pupil learning. These assessments include: (1) clinical teaching performance evaluations; (2) the performance of P-12 pupils in units taught by our candidates using a Teacher Work Sample; (3) alumni survey data; and (4) impact data from parents of P-8 pupils.

The strong commitment of the teacher education program at Western to prepare all candidates to teach diverse learners is validated in the data concerning diverse learners. Western bases its diverse learner assessment upon the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) diversity standard. To develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions to achieve that outcome, the program’s comprehensive approach to diversity begins with admission to teacher education where candidates submit an autobiography reflecting on their understanding of diversity followed by a personal interview where dispositions regarding diversity are addressed. Data for the most recent three semesters show that of 278 autobiographies evaluated, the mean rating was 3.49 on a four-point scale. One of the criteria on the interview evaluation is: Does the candidate value individual differences and demonstrate commitment to the achievement of all students? For the teacher education interview, 83% of 362 candidates met expectations. Those not meeting expectations are required to complete a follow-up interview with advisors. Advisors address any issues with teacher candidates in the follow-up interview and create a plan for improvement.

Competency related to diversity is required throughout the curriculum. As examples, the following courses have significant diversity content and assignments that develop knowledge and skills to differentiate instruction for all learners: EDCI 231 Historical, Social, and Philosophical Foundations of Education; SPED 335 (or 336 or 337) Teaching Exceptional Children; PSY 320 Child and Adolescent Development; and PSY 321 Educational Psychology.

Teaching Exceptional Children (SPED 335) has a 16-hour field experience component with a reflective journal. Seventy-seven percent of the candidates in the most recent semester earned a rating of exceeds standards and the other 23% met standard on the field experience assignment in the course. Two required courses, both with required field components, contain assignments that require candidates to develop differentiated lesson plans to teach diverse learners. To meet the standard for this requirement, the rubric requires: Appropriate evidence of a developed unit with differentiated lessons; variety of appropriate strategies; minimum of three lessons; and at least one useful adaptation for diverse learner included for each lesson. For the most recent semester, candidates received an average score of 3.69 of 4.00 on this assignment.

The experiences cited above prepare candidates to be successful in teaching diverse learners as reported in the data on the Teacher Work Sample.

**Impact on P-12 Learning: Evaluation of Clinical Teaching Performance.** University supervisors, cooperating teachers and candidates evaluate the candidate’s clinical experience
performance during the final semester on several criteria including Facilitating Instruction and Facilitating Learning for All Learners. Performance indicators that are underlined are those most related to pupil learning.

Indicators for Facilitating Instruction include:
- accurate records to document student performance, and
- understands how students learn and develop and plans appropriate instructional activities for diverse student needs and different levels of difficulty.

Indicators for Facilitating Learning for All Learners include:
- effective in facilitating measurable achievement in pupils;
- generates data that demonstrate pupil learning;
- facilitates learner progress from beginning of instruction to end of instruction;
- facilitates a high level of student achievement;
- facilitates learning for ALL learners including diverse learners; and
- demonstrates effectiveness with diverse learners.

Figure 3 shown below indicates the average evaluation rating for Western candidates’ teaching performance during the student teaching semester. The average rating for 815 candidates impacting approximately 16,000 P-12 learners over ten semesters for Facilitating Instruction is 3.68 on a four-point scale where 3 = At Standard and 4 = Above Standard. The average rating for 118 Western candidates for Learning for All Learners is 3.70. This last criterion was added to the instrument three semesters ago to further assess and document impact on student learning. These data show positive impact on P-12 student learning.

Impact on P-12 Learning: Teacher Work Samples. Our Teacher Work Sample (TWS) demonstrates the impact our teacher candidates have on P-12 learning at the classroom and individual levels during the student teaching semester. The TWS is documentation of teaching a unit to a group of students and shows the impact of the teacher candidate on the performance of
P-12 learners by comparing the level of knowledge or skills the pupils possess before the unit and the level of knowledge or skills after the unit was taught.

The teacher candidate prepares a unit of learning, teaches the unit including pre and post testing pupils, and reflects on the unit to improve future practice. As part of the TWS, teacher candidates teach differentiated lessons to diverse learners as well as engage in whole classroom instruction.

Western teacher candidates prepare and teach differentiated lessons for one or two diverse learners in the class. A diverse learner is defined as an individual learner with unique needs such as differing physical, social, emotional, cultural, and/or intellectual characteristics which may affect learning. Although several pupils in a given class may meet the definition of a diverse learner, the teacher candidate selects one or two students. Pre-to-post-test comparisons of 187 diverse learners provide strong evidence of teacher candidate impact on student learning at the individual level. The pretest average score for diverse learners over four semesters is 38 with a standard deviation of 23 on a scale of 100 and the posttest average score is 75 with a standard deviation of 22 (t = 28, p < .001) indicating an average gain of 56.5 points and a standardized mean gain (Glass’s delta) of 1.6.

Regarding whole class instruction, analyses of 224 TWS from Western candidates in Spring and Fall 2005 and Spring and Fall 2006 provide strong evidence of teacher candidate impact on student learning. Pre-to-post-test comparisons of P-12 students demonstrate significant evidence of teacher candidate impact on student learning for 4,777 pupils directly taught by Western teacher candidates over four semesters. The pretest average for the entire group was 43 with a standard deviation of 19 on a scale of 100 and the posttest average was 79 with a standard deviation of 13 (t = 21, p < .001) yielding an average gain of 36 points and a standardized mean gain (Glass’s delta) of 1.89. Figure 4 below and Figure 5 on the following page show examples of the average pre and post test scores for selected subject areas at the classroom level. These figures demonstrate that Western teacher candidates make a dramatic and significant difference in student learning at the classroom level in the subjects of math and science in kindergarten through grade 12 and provide compelling evidence of teacher candidate impact on student learning at the classroom level.

Figure 4. Western Teacher Work Sample Averages for Pre and Post Test Scores in Math at the Classroom Level, Spring and Fall 2005, 2006.
Figure 4 on the previous page and Figure 5 below show average pre and post test scores for math and science for kindergarten through 12th grade. Pre-to-post comparisons provide evidence of positive teacher candidate impact on student learning at the classroom level in math and science.

**Figure 5. Western Teacher Work Sample Averages for Pre and Post Test Scores for Science at the Classroom Level, Spring and Fall 2005, 2006.**

**Impact on P-12 Learning: Alumni Survey Data.** In the college survey of alumni, teacher education graduates indicated a positive perception of their ability to impact student learning after graduation. Ninety-two percent agreed or strongly agreed that the education they received at Western helped them to be committed to helping all students achieve success.

**Impact on P-12 Learning: Parent Data.** Western has collected unique data that provide further evidence about our candidates’ impact on P-12 learning. Western teacher candidates provide individualized instruction outside the classroom with pupils qualifying for a Reading Enrichment Program. After eight weeks, a parent survey assesses the impact of the program on their children. Four semesters of data from parents indicate that parents agreed that their child
learned new reading strategies (at least 92%) and their child’s self-confidence increased as a result of the program (at least 92%). All parents agreed that their child established a rapport with the teacher candidate (100%) and their child’s attitude toward reading improved during the program (at least 95%). All parents (100%) agreed that, if given the opportunity, they would enroll their child in the program again.

**Summary.** Western’s “Partnership for Performance” has effectively prepared classroom teachers for P-12 schools since 1997. As a collaborative effort among faculty members in education, the faculty in arts and sciences, and the P-12 schools, we use assessment to provide credible evidence that our partnership makes a difference in our candidate’s learning and in the learning of the P-12 pupils they teach. Our partnership uses data like that described above as a part of our overall assessment system. The data is used as a part of a continuous improvement process for enhancing the quality of our teacher education programs. By relying on data-driven activities we know that our programs positively impact teacher candidates’ learning and that our candidates, in turn, positively impact the P-12 students they teach. As a result, our teacher education programs and candidates assist our partnership to meet its goal: a quality education for every student in P-12 schools served by the partnership.