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Vertically Aligning Evidence and Argument in the Elementary Education Program

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E&A Fellows Project Proposal

Proponent:	Dr. Jeanine Huss
Department:	School of Teacher Education
Date of Submission:	October 29, 2015

Project Title.

Vertically Aligning Evidence and Argument in the Elementary Education Program

Project Objective(s). Briefly describe the intent of the project.

This project will create/modify assignments in which students must articulate their abilities to provide and assemble evidence and write a supported and logical argument throughout the elementary education program.

Project Description. Briefly describe intended activities, targeted courses/programs, and timeline for completion.

Using classes which are common to the Elementary Education program, assignments will be added in which students must be able to show evidence and be able to argue their ideas. To make sure that all elementary education students can participate in this project, the classes would include: ELED 345, ELED 355, ELED 405, ELED 406, and ELED 407. This would allow the IVS classes which take place in Owensboro, Elizabethtown and Glasgow to also participate. EDU 250 is a class which affects only some of the WKU students (because some students take the course in a local community college before enrolling at WKU) so it has been left out intentionally. This entails meeting with the professors who teach these classes. Often there are at least two different professors who teach each of these classes, and because I only teach one of these classes, it involves meeting with two others for each of the classes listed. I would also discuss the changes with all of the elementary faculty at the Elementary Education meetings held following every monthly School of Teacher Education meeting. ELED 345, ELED 355 and ELED 407 would be the first focus in the Spring 2016 semester. These are the earliest classes in the program. ELED 406 and ELED 405 would follow Fall 2016 since these classes happen in the students' senior year right before student teaching. Because there is also now a joint program with Special Education in which students in the Special Ed/ELED program take ELED 405, ELED 406, and ELED 407, there would also be a need to visit with the Special Education faculty members for them to see how evidence and argument has been added to their students' program.

Relationship of the project to E&A objectives and student learning outcomes. What specific E&A priorities are addressed?

1. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to gather sound and relevant evidence to address an issue.
 - Students in ELED 345 learn basic lesson planning strategies. They can collect information on how to help certain populations of students within their classrooms. They might also collect information on research based teaching practices.
 - Students in ELED 355 learn ideas about diversity and meeting the needs of all learners. Students can gather information to help meet the needs of diverse learners within their field classrooms. Students can also read articles/books which help them better understand diversity and then use their textbook to back up their ideas about diversity with facts.
2. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize the assembled evidence.
 - Students in ELED 407 collect data on pretests and posttests. Students should be able to put this information in graphic form.
3. WKU students will demonstrate the ability to articulate a logical and supported argument based on this analysis.
 - Students in ELED 407 take the pretest/posttest data and articulate how well the lesson(s) went by how much K-6th students learned. The data is analyzed and used to explain their results.

- Students in ELED 406 do a coteach where one student observes a lesson and one teaches a lesson. The student watching writes down the questions asked by the peer who is teaching. They should use the evidence from their peer who observed them teach to say how well they were able to ask higher order thinking questions during their lesson.

Anticipated plan for assessing project success. How will the project contribute data to the overall assessment of E&A?

Because this is a program wide implementation, it would show longitudinally how students in the Elementary Education program develop over the course of their studies within their undergraduate careers. The assignments for every class would be collected and used for SACSCOC &/or CAEP as sources of evidence in how the overall population of students is performing.

Currently some assignments are universal within a course. These assignments are known as critical performances and are posted on a website to collect data. We could have students post information on the website, if the assignments are critical performances, or we could collect information from each of the teachers who teaches the course. I would like to look at their abilities to gather information, and make sense of the information and report a logical argument within ELED 345, and then try it again in ELED 355 &/or ELED 407 and finally ELED 406 and ELED 405. Because the courses have different focuses, I would just need to make sure that the assignment fits a need within the course.

Anticipated number of students impacted by the project annually.

The following is a list of students currently enrolled in this fall's classes:

Fall 2015 ELED 345-78 (Preblock); Fall 2015 ELED 355/ELED 407-56 (Block I); Fall 2015 ELED 406/ELED 405-93 (Block II)

- It can be expected that numbers will be similar for the Fall 2016 semester as well.
- The Spring semester has less students enrolled in Block II but more students enrolled in Block I and similar numbers for Preblock. This means approximately 320 students are impacted each semester and 640 students are impacted within a year.
- However, it should be pointed out that students typically progress from Preblock to Block I and then Block II, so some of these students will overlap.

Contribution to department, college, or university priorities.

This would help the Elementary Education program get prepared for the accreditation with the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). This information would fit with the Strategic Plan for WKU, the College of Education and Behavioral Science and the School of Teacher Education.

It fits well within the strategic plan of fostering academic excellence. Students would improve their writing abilities and their abilities to articulate their ideas while using data to back up their thoughts. Our students become teachers within their communities and sharing words of wisdom and letters to parents is an important skill we would like all future educators to possess. This will help our students' abilities to better explain to parents or administrators.

This also fits nicely with the strategic plan for promoting a dynamic and diverse university community. We provide students within the elementary education program scaffolding to help them succeed but we also want our students to become members of their local communities through their abilities to communicate with parents, principals, and community members. Therefore, it is essential for our students to understand how to include their parents and students in building a community within their classroom and school. Students often will write about diversity on a surface level, and using information to support their ideas will show their abilities for argumentation. This would show the growth of students' abilities to find data, analyze data, and discuss data based on the analysis of said.