ERC Awarded Continuation Grant to Evaluate UWGH’s Urban Education Initiative

The Education Research Center (ERC) at Texas A&M University is pleased to announce it has been awarded a $300,000 grant by United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) to conduct the Year 4 evaluation of the agency’s urban education initiative. This phase of the evaluation examines a scaled-up version of UWGH’s urban education initiative, which involves over 30 non-profit agency programs that deliver educational services for more than 300,000 children and youth from disadvantaged circumstances in the Houston metropolitan area. Hersh Waxman, Yolanda Padrón, and Kayla Rollins are Co-PIs of the project. Additional ERC researchers involved include Nancy Weber, Jackie Stillisano, and Anna Borjack. CEHD doctoral students Kim Wright, Luke Lyons, Rachel Beachy, and Elba Barahona are also involved in the grant.

The Education Initiative is an outgrowth of the efforts of a task force of Houston community leaders recruited by UWGH to identify various means by which the organization could support and impact the work of the city’s school districts. For this study, the ERC research team will implement a mixed-methods approach for both formative and summative purposes. They will provide information and suggestions for making mid-project changes to assist UW in improving its efforts throughout the year. The summative evaluation will examine the effectiveness of educational programs and practices. The ERC will continue its work in developing a longitudinal, database system to be used to describe the quality and effectiveness of the educational programs on students, teachers, parents, and the community as a whole. Systematic observations, interviews, surveys, focus groups, and quantitative outcome data will be used to examine various program components.

Additionally, the ERC team will analyze academic achievement and socio-emotional data for students involved in UWGH programs at schools and community agencies involved in the Education Collaborative. This initiative will include data from four large school districts in the Houston area, including Houston ISD, Spring Branch ISD, Aldine ISD, and Alief ISD.

“This is an exciting project for us because of the partnerships we’ve developed with (a) several large, urban school districts; (b) non-profit agencies such as the Houston Area Urban League, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, Children’s Museum of Houston, and Project GRAD; and (c) United Way staff,” said Waxman. “The partnership is strongly committed to improving students’ academic achievement and socio-emotional outcomes. We anticipate that some of the promising practices emerging from the United Way initiative will be diffused more rapidly and refined by other urban districts because of the improvement science approach ERC researchers have adopted and implemented for prior and current phases of this study.”

ERC Welcomes New Research Associate

Nancy Weber recently joined the ERC as a research associate. Weber graduated with her Ph.D in Curriculum and Instruction from the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture at Texas A&M University, receiving the Distinguished Honor Graduate Award from the College of Education and Human Development. Her dissertation examined the role of teacher education in the development of first-year teachers’ self-efficacy and pedagogical practices. Weber earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology and her Master of Education degrees from Texas A&M and was a secondary English language arts teacher in Houston metropolitan area.

ERC Staff

Hersh Waxman
Director

Jacqueline Stillisano
Co-Director

Kayla Rollins
Coordinator of Teacher Education Research

Danielle Bairrington Brown
Assistant Research Scientist

Nancy Weber
Research Associate

Kim Wright
Research Associate

Haiping Hao
Post-Doctoral Research Intern

Elba Barahona
Graduate Research Intern

Luxi Feng
Graduate Research Intern

Luke Lyons
Graduate Research Intern

Ethan Vieira
Undergraduate Student Research Assistant

Program Area Leaders

Yolanda Padrón
Educator Preparation

Lori Taylor
School Finance, Resources, & Facilities

Yolanda Padrón Honored by Texas Association of Bilingual Education (TABE)

Yolanda Padrón, ERC Program Area Leader and Professor of Educational Psychology, recently received the 2015 Texas Association of Bilingual Education Higher Education Award. The award honors outstanding individuals that have earned the recognition, respect, and admiration of bilingual educators and their community.
ERC Co-director Jacqueline Stillisano Appointed to Board of Texas Evaluation Network

Jacqueline Stillisano, co-director of the Education Research Center, was recently appointed to the Board of Directors of the Texas Evaluation Network (TEN).

TEN was established in November 2010 as the Texas affiliate of the American Evaluation Association. The organization’s goals are to promote and advocate for evaluation, build evaluation capacity in the state of Texas, provide professional development opportunities for Texas evaluators, and establish a networking venue for individuals involved in the field of evaluation.

Hersh Waxman, ERC Director, noted that Stillisano’s role as a board member of TEN supports the ERC’s work in evaluation of educational programs designed to improve P-16 school policy and practice.

“I feel Jackie’s appointment to the board of the Texas Evaluation Network reflects her strong commitment to collaborating with evaluation colleagues from across the state to promote high quality program evaluation,” said Waxman.

“Stillisano’s leadership with TEN provides a great opportunity for the ERC to support CEHD’s mission of fostering innovation and development of evaluation practice in the state. In addition, as a state affiliate of the American Evaluation Association, her work with TEN has the potential to impact evaluation practice at the national level.

In addition to her work with TEN, Stillisano is a member of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) and the American Education Research Association (AERA). She has served on numerous proposal review teams for the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, and Educate Indiana and has published articles and presented nationally, internationally, and locally on her evaluation studies.

Matsuda Presents ERC Seminar Focused on Impact of Intelligent Online Courses

The ERC hosted its first seminar of the 2015-16 series on September 22, 2015. Dr. Noboru Matsuda, new associate professor in the Department of Teaching, Learning, and Culture, presented A Next Generation Online Course: Research and Practice with a Real-Life Impact. Matsuda’s presentation detailed the value of integrating adaptive technology intelligent tutoring systems into the format of traditional online courses. He emphasized that this learner-centered approach to online coursework can support the efficient development of high quality, personalized courses that can address common issues such as shallow learning, unstable memory, and assessment validity.

Professor Matsuda’s presentation highlighted the value of integrating adaptive technology intelligent tutoring systems into the format of traditional online courses. He emphasized that this learner-centered approach to online coursework can support the efficient development of high quality, personalized courses that can address common issues such as shallow learning, unstable memory, and assessment validity.

ERC Seminar Highlights Holocaust Education Research

Dr. Daniel Bowen, assistant professor in Educational Administration & Human Resource Development, presented Never Forget: The Impacts of Holocaust Education Enrichment on Adolescents’ Civic Values and Perspectives. Bowen’s talk focused on a current study in which he is assessing the causal effects of one particular Holocaust education resource: school-sponsored field trips to the Holocaust Museum Houston. Through a field experiment with approximately 2,000 student participants, Bowen hopes to provide the most rigorous quantitative evaluation to date on the impacts of Holocaust education enrichment efforts.

According to Bowen, “Teaching about the Holocaust in a meaningful way poses considerable challenges for K-12 educators. In response to the challenges, Holocaust museums and memorials have developed supports for educators to improve instruction with the goal of increasing students’ content knowledge about the Holocaust, in addition to improving students’ tolerance, historical empathy, and civic competencies.”

Contact Us:
112 Harrington Tower, College Station, TX 77843-4232
erc.cehd.tamu.edu