Education Research Center Awarded Continuation Grant to Evaluate Large Urban Education Initiative

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The Education Research Center (ERC) at Texas A&M University is pleased to announce it has been awarded a grant by United Way of Greater Houston (UWGH) to conduct the Year 3 evaluation of the agency’s urban education initiative. This third 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, Kayla Rollins, and Susana Franco-Fuenmayor are Co-PIs of the project. Additional ERC researchers involved include Anna Boriack, Kim Wright, and Elba Barahona.

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 project, the ERC team will work with the UWGH staff to design and implement the evaluation and report on the success of the UWGH Education Initiative. The evaluation team will develop data collection instruments (rubrics, surveys, observation protocols, etc.) to collect context, process, implementation, and outcome data on UWGH’s education programs to be implemented within local schools: (a) UWGH Reading Together Summer Libraries and Summer Book Clubs, (b) Peer-to-Peer Reading Tutoring, (c) Education Collaborative task force focused on academic success, (d) UWGH Reading Together, (e) Parent Education and Engagement, (f) Summer Learning and Engagement – Mastering Algebra Together Houston [MATH] Camp, and (g) Peer-to-Peer Math Tutoring. Additionally, the ERC team will analyze academic achievement 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 education initiative by UWGH will continue to serve as a long-term vision for the agency as it works towards its goal to help the Houston metropolitan area become a place where high-quality education and high school graduation are the norm and where resources are available to help all students achieve to their highest ability,” said Waxman. “Year 3 of the evaluation will continue to focus on examining the effectiveness of the initiative.”

The ERC research team will implement a mixed-methods approach for both formative and summative purposes. During this collaborative process, evaluators 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, databased 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.

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