HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL EXPANSIONS PROJECT

A Series of Studies Exploring Student and Teacher Characteristics on the Connecticut Mastery Tests Results in Reading, Mathematics, and Writing for Pupils of Graduates from UConn’s Neag School of Education’s Teacher Preparation Program

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The purpose of these studies is to study the achievement patterns of PreK-12 pupils from graduates of our teacher preparation program. This is designed to provide evidence on the value of teacher preparation in promoting pupil learning and relates to all tenants of the Teachers for a New Era (TNE) initiative, funded by the Carnegie Corporation with additional funding from the Annenberg and Ford Foundations.

Research questions addressed by Educational Expansions Project (EEP) are important for the TNE, teacher education programs, and local and state policy makers. We will investigate to what degree there significant differences for pupils in the classrooms instructed by Neag are prepared teachers in comparison to those in classrooms instructed by non-Neag prepared teachers on the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) in reading, mathematics, science and writing.

We will focus on the impact of pupil characteristics. For example, results disaggregated by gender, grade, subject area, program (e.g., special education), length of time in a particular school, growth over time, pupil aspirations, self-efficacy, perspectives on the learning environment, daily average attendance and suspension rates. We will also focus on teacher characteristics. For example, teacher factors such as gender, race/ethnicity, preparation program completed, and longevity.

Variables from seven participating districts will include dependent variables from grades 3-8 pupil performance on the new 4th generation Connecticut Mastery Test in reading, mathematics, and writing scores from 2005-2006, 2006-2007, and 2007-2008 and science scores from 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 from Neag graduates and all others teachers. Sample independent variables collected will include gender, race/ethnicity, special education, and English language program status. Depending on district interest, variables might also include physical fitness results, in-house developed criteria reference test results, Degrees of Reading Power test results, course patterns, and other variables.

Guidance is being provided by the Neag Assessment Subcommittee for Teacher Education (formerly the TNE Assessment Committee) chaired by Mary Yakimowski. This committee is comprised of university experts (Neag, CLAS, and Agr), PreK-12 district and state representatives, undergraduate and graduate Neag students, and community members.

The timeline for this project is over multiple years through 2010-2011. During 2007-2008, the university and state department of education established a partnership. The committee received an initially orientation on the project and the models of statistical analyses that might be appropriate for use in the EEP. The committee also articulated the limitations including the absence of pre-post data comparison, small samples sizes of Neag graduates in some districts, student and teacher mobility, lack of “growth” score on the test, and the inability to track students who move between school districts. Further complications include ensuring complete confidentiality to all participating school districts and the availability of data within the state department of education system. We also developed a theoretical model for the IB/M and TCPCG components of our teacher preparation program.

The next steps involve obtaining and cleaning two years worth of data from the districts, determining which statistical analyses should be utilized by the committee, and pilot testing the model.

Concurrently, the university/state partnership will begin establishing a data warehouse so that, in three years, this type of information will be electronically accessible so that these efforts will lead to continued knowledge of the impact of the teacher preparation program on pupil achievement.