Case Study Plan to
Assess the Impact of WMU Graduates on PK-12 Student Learning and Development

During the 2019-2020 academic year, we will undertake a multiple-case, exploratory case study of graduates of our teacher education program. We are using the exploratory method as this is a new way of considering teacher impact. The multiple-case method will allow us to determine if a pattern exists across program graduates teaching in various K-12 contexts, and at different grade levels and subject areas.

We are limiting our study to program completers in their first three years, because the Michigan Department of Education has determined that the effect of the initial teacher education program on a teacher’s practice is no longer measurable after this period.

In 2019-2020, we will focusing on our 2015-16, 2016-17, and 2017-18 program completers who teach in schools and districts within a 60-mile radius around which the teacher education program is located. We wish to take advantage of the close-proximity of our graduates to interview and conduct focus groups of the whole, and to collect artifacts of practice and make classroom observations from a purposeful sample. We will initially invite all program graduates to participate in focus groups with a goal of 20% or more. From our focus groups we will ask for volunteers to complete the Impact on Student Learning and Observation. We will review the volunteer list to try to ensure that we are able to interview program completers of various genders, grade-levels, subject-areas, and school/district locations.

Data Collection Plan: There will be multiple data collection points. The process will begin by inviting all program graduates from the past three years who are teaching within a 60-mile radius of the EPP to participate in a focus group, the purpose of which is to explain the additional research opportunities in which we would like to engage with them.

From the focus group, we will identify volunteers for the next part. We will begin small (N=5) and add 5 each semester until we reach about 10% for further study. The study will include three elements: 1) Observations: Observation of program graduates/teachers at three points in time, using the same validated observation tool used by the program during the graduates’ student teaching experiences. This will be completed using GoReact; 2) Interviews: A one-on-one interview using a faculty-designed protocol for the completer and the local administrator (with permission of the completer); 3) Impact on Student Learning (validated rubric): The collection of the program graduates’ work samples at three random points of time. Graduates will be provided an envelope and short set of instructions and on one curriculum unit of at least 5 lessons, will fill out a cover sheet describing the context of the activity, and then attach whatever they asked the students to do that day in the envelope and mail them to the program; 4) School effectiveness data: We will analyze Michigan Department of Education teacher effectiveness data for teachers in the same schools and districts as our program graduates.

Analysis: We will use a mixed method approach. We will first analyze the data at the level of a completer as a case. We will compare the classroom observation evaluation using our existing rubric. We will code the interview for completers’ perceived strengths and weaknesses in their own perception of their teaching and our program. We will categorize along the lines of InTASC Standards, while looking for additional emerging ideas. We will then take the coded interview, chunk the results, and look for emerging themes. We will use teacher-level test and student learning data as a measure of the success of the completer. We will compare our measures of practice, beliefs, and knowledge with student learning. Each candidate will represent a case and we will compare across cases. The second approach is to treat all completers as a single case. We will repeat the same analysis, except chunking the interviews together, the observations together, etc. This will allow us to holistically look at our completers. Using
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the findings from the Impact on Student Learning, Unit Plan, and observations we will come up with a scoring protocol for interviews (self-efficacy, attributes of program, etc.), observation (alignment with best practice), impact on student learning, and unit plan. We will then do a statistical analysis to look at what components might impact student learning. After completing this mixed methods analysis, we will come up with a less rigorous protocol that will allow us to get the most feedback in a reasonable way. The final protocol will be manageable and experimentally based. We plan to have our first case studies completed by December 2019. This data will inform the broader program review that is continuing through this summer and 2019-20.