

## **2009 Wisconsin Research Seminar on Improving Educator Quality: Improving Practice and Expanding Collaboration in Challenging Times**

**Title of Proposal:** Documenting the Impact of Wisconsin's Quality Educator Initiative (PI 34):  
A Collaborative Exploration of Teaching and Learning Outcomes

**Submitted by:**

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**Strand:**

The development, use and impact of quality professional development plans for initial (and professional) educators.

**Abstract**

In 1994, individuals from across the state of Wisconsin initiated a bold venture: to redesign the state's professional education and preparation program approval process and professional educator licensing system. The purpose of this venture, adopted in 2000 and fully implemented in 2004, was to create a system that would "...reflect the accomplishment and demonstration of accepted professional standards." Before too much more time passes, it is important to re-engage the educational community for the purpose of discussing our progress and exploring the feasibility of assessing the *characteristics of performances* associated with PI 34.

## Context

In 1994, individuals from across the state of Wisconsin initiated a bold venture: to redesign the state's professional education and preparation program approval process and professional educator licensing system. The purpose of this venture was to create a system that would "...reflect the accomplishment and demonstration of accepted professional standards." (Burmester, 2007 p. iii).

The resulting administrative code, PI 34, was adopted in 2000 and represents a major shift from a traditional model of professional development to a dynamic, 21<sup>st</sup> Century model. Though this shift is complex in its implementation, its fundamentals can be characterized as a movement away from *inputs* to an emphasis on *outcomes*; that is, a movement away from courses and credits toward the documentation of performances aligned to standards with greater accountability of what educators and their P-12 pupils need to know and be able to do. The shift in Wisconsin resulted from national efforts to create a vision for high levels of student achievement "buttressed by a coherent state system that links teacher training, teacher certification, the curriculum and testing together into a structure within which we can legitimately hold schools accountable" (Consortium for Policy Research in Education, 1991, p. 3). Systemically, the policies outline a theory of action intended to hold teachers, and the institutions that prepare each of them, accountable for what students learn in the classroom.

This shift is clearly evident in the changes made for renewal of an educator's license. Under PI 34, educators (i.e., teacher, pupil personnel or administrator) who earned their initial educator license after August 1, 2004 are required to complete a Professional Development Plan (PDP) demonstrating their professional growth. The PDP must lead to "increased proficiency in two or more of Wisconsin Educator Standards (documented by evidence), and must evidence,

upon completion, the effect of professional growth upon student learning” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2006, p. 7.). This requirement pertains to initial educators wishing to move to the professional educator license and is also required to retain the professional educator license. In addition, any educator who obtained licensure prior to 2004 may choose to use the PDP process for licensure renewal.

Renewal of an educator’s license (i.e., from initial to professional) is based on the completion of the PDP as verified by a review team. For initial educators, the PDP process is usually formally “launched” during the second year of employment with the approval of their goal(s). Goal(s) must be approved by a DPI trained PDP team, consisting of a peer, an administrator and a representative from a Wisconsin Institution of Higher Education (IHE). Final verification must be completed within three to five years from date of initial licensure (exceptions granted under limited conditions).

The educator will implement the PDP with guidance from a mentor and members of their PDP team. The PDP must be reviewed each year by the initial educator. This review includes on-going reflection and summary of progress in meeting the goal(s). Again, granting of the professional license is dependent upon completion of the PDP and verification of professional growth and the evidence of that growth on student learning.

#### Proposed Line of Inquiry

This administrative code was founded on a belief that “greater accountability within a results-driven system would improve student learning.” (Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative PI 34 *Restructuring Educator Preparation and Licensing*). It is our position that this call for greater accountability should extend beyond assessing the performance of individual educators and educational preparation programs into a study of the system itself; in this case PI 34. The

Wisconsin educational community has a shared responsibility to ensure that the processes associated with PI 34 are having their desired effect: to improve of student learning.

The 2009 Wisconsin Research Seminar provides a unique opportunity to engage educators in an open exploration of how to go about assessing the impact of PI 34. Since PI 34 has numerous elements, the priority for this initial exploration would relate directly to an examination of the Professional Development Plan.

The following questions are offered as examples of how we might initiate this exploration with our colleagues:

1. What can we learn from an analysis of PDPs, (including a review of approved/not approved goals, annual reviews and final verification)?
2. What methodologies could be used to analyze PDPs and for what purposes would we engage in the analysis? Purposes might include exploring the following:
  - a. Using qualitative research methods that would identify patterns, would it be possible to identify the ways in which Professional Development Plans reflect professional growth and the evidence of that growth on student learning?
  - b. Is it possible to document, through an in-depth lesson study model design...
    - i. ...the overall quality of PDPs?
    - ii. ... a shift from traditional input measures documenting professional growth to true learning outcomes?
3. What are the implications of the lessons learned from this analysis?
  - a. On initial educator preparation as it relates to advancing equitable learning opportunities for the diverse populations of Wisconsin learners?
  - b. On professional development opportunities offered by Institutions of Higher Education, local school districts, and Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) as it relates to advancing equitable learning opportunities for the diverse populations of Wisconsin learners?
4. What, if any, policy modifications are needed to support/strengthen theory of action in PI 34?

### *Theoretical Orientation*

While it is pre-mature to specify the exact manner of such systematic analysis, it is likely that these questions could effectively be addressed through an in-depth , valid and reliable review of PDP documents (e.g., approved goals, annual reviews, completed/verified PDPs). The

theoretical framework that might frame our document analysis of the PDPs wells from the understanding that classrooms are interactive and ever-changing; a dynamic that demands teachers develop a professional practice that continually expands their intellectual capacity to make responsive and pedagogically-skillful decisions. For these reasons, the Professional Development Plan should “create opportunities for learning that both call into question and extend participants’ current understanding of, and in practice” (Dall’Alba & Sandberg, 2006, p. 402). More importantly, the *process* of creating a PDP and having it verified ought to help teachers embody the disposition that views professional development as an ‘unfolding circularity’<sup>1</sup> “that is, as their understanding developed over time, it presupposed and elaborated something already understood” (p. 392). This type of learning and professional development challenges traditional understandings of learning to teach as the acquisition of a finite package of knowledge and skills and replaces it with an embodied understanding of teaching as a professional practice that has no end point.

### Summary

This proposal is intended to advance a beginning line of inquiry that has the potential to shed valuable light on how PI 34 is meeting its intended purpose to create a system that would reflect the accomplishment and demonstration of accepted professional standards. This collaborative inquiry would build upon the broad-based partnerships initiated in 1994, when the idea for program redesign first emerged. This exploration is consistent with the belief that was the catalyst for this redesign: that greater accountability within a results-driven system will result in improve student learning.

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<sup>1</sup> This pattern of professional development was first identified by Martin Heidegger in 1927.

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