

Critical Love and Elementary Teacher Candidates: Aligning Methods Courses and Field Experience Towards Clear DEI Outcomes

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What is the issue you hoped to work with in your DIG Grant? What are your goals?

Currently, the elementary program methods courses and field experience is operating under a recently (2021) revised model, prompted by a common goal of improving teacher candidates' outcomes in schools during early field experience, student teaching, and as beginning teachers, and in response to increased focus on licensure requirements. Our grant work is primarily focused on identified issues related to elementary teacher candidates' experiences and outcomes in the program, including: directly connect elementary education methods courses and field experience to the Intercultural Learning Certificate Program (ILCP) and incorporating critical love as a central theoretical framework in the methods and field placement courses in the elementary education program. In a fall revision to the application, the team identified the need to engage deep self work as primarily white faculty working to understand and then use the Critical Love framework (Sealey-Ruiz, Archaeology of Self) in methods and field coursework.

Who are the students who will learn from this project? Why do you feel it is important to address this issue? What is your motivation to pursue this particular issue?

This project is focused on EDU courses taken by elementary education undergraduate students enrolled in their junior and senior year methods and field placement courses. Our motivation for this work is a shared concern around teacher candidates' and faculty's dispositions towards schools, children and adolescents, families and communities, including concepts of love and care. Moreover, we have a shared concern about how to bridge required field placements and the program towards better outcomes for children in schools and teacher candidates. The team decided that work focused on the Critical Love framework seemed to be a pragmatic and achievable means to bring these competing parts together during the undergraduate program of study.

What actions did your team take throughout the project?

Significant actions taken by the team that are aligned with the goals of this project include:

Collaboration with Dr. Cherrel Miller-Dyce as a consultant for a direct connection between courses and the ILCP; consultation with Dr. Dyce around the implementation, including her feedback to pause on the

implementation of critical love in courses/field work for fall, and instead, do a significant amount of self-work and development around understanding the framework. In response, team faculty teaching identified EDU courses each identified places in our courses and field placement to incorporate the goals, language, events, or reflections of the ILCP.

In consultation with Dr. Dyce, the team decided to shift some of our available funding to work directly with Dr. Yolanda Sealey-Ruiz, who authored the Critical Love framework; we also applied for and received a CATL rolling grant to fund part of this consultation. We met with Dr. Sealey-Ruiz in September 2022 and developed broad ideas for the 2 field experience courses (EDU3040 and EDU4040) as well as broad ideas for how the focused courses might partner with the School of Education's Curriculum Resources Center (CRC) to implement programming around *Critical Love* and curate resources for teacher candidates and faculty towards these aims.

In the spring, members of the elementary faculty at large continued to talk through possible seminar designs for EDU3040 and EDU4040 that would address other program concerns; this work inadvertently fused a bit with the DIG work and 2 faculty members (not on the DIG team) began piloting some ideas shared with the DIG team (specifically, how the program might hold focused seminars within the time and location constraints of field experience). The elementary program continued monthly discussions of the program revision and again, the DIG grant aims spilled into a separate subcommittee focused on the annual QAS report. While both of these separate but related pieces of work were unplanned with the DIG grant focus, we believe it speaks to the fluid nature of designing and redesigning courses, and adapting to the nature of field experience.

What was the end result timeline of this project?

Summer 2022

- Worked with Dr. Dyce to identify the integration points and synthesis of the ILCP
- Faculty revised field experience and methods courses to more clearly integrate ILCP

Fall 2022

- Applied for and secured rolling grant funding with CATL to consult with Dr. Sealey-Ruiz
- We consulted with Dr. Sealey-Ruiz on integrating the Critical Love framework into field experiences.

Spring 2023

- DIG team met to discuss the crossover/overlap between DIG grant aims, EDU3040/4040 subcommittee, and QAS subcommittee as well as current pilot of seminar designs on site
- Determined how teacher candidates will learn about the *Critical Love* framework beginning in Fall 2023 and what shared resources will be used (introduction in early seminar, reflective work on site during focus seminars)
- Synthesized findings and experience to share with faculty teaching 4010/4040 and instructional methods courses in the fall
- Created a draft plan for fall course implementation of the Critical Love framework
- Created a draft plan for sharing this work beyond the elementary program

What are your plans for sharing this project beyond your group?

Early Fall 2023

- Opening Department Meeting Planning Week: Share the outcomes and implementation of this project
- Plan meeting with all instructors supervising students in field placements, and teaching capstone courses and instructional methods courses to share results and discuss how to integrate relevant experiences in the context of courses and practicum experiences.
- Plan for and or generate prompts for *Critical Love* framework in the students' observation logs and/or debriefing discussions; create common slides and identify shared readings that tie the Critical Love framework into fieldwork

Late Fall 2023/Spring 2024

- Teacher Education Council: Share results with relevant faculty in fall opening Teacher Education Committee meetings of 2024
- Examine, and revise as relevant, syllabi to include information about the *Critical Love* framework