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LAURE Research Process Essay

Last spring, my faculty mentor Dr. Wasburn-Moses reached out to Miami special

education majors, seeking a student to collaborate with on an independent study research project.

This project focused on alternatives to exclusionary school discipline (eg., suspension or

expulsion) plausible for most schools to implement. Throughout the course of my project, I

compiled key discoveries into an annotated bibliography, gathered key sources into a categorized

bibliography, constructed an outline of a manuscript for publication, and submitted the finished

manuscript to a peer-reviewed journal. The project also unexpectedly uncovered an intervention

tool that has greatly influenced the research agenda of Dr. Wasburn-Moses, who is taking a

research leave to focus on this agenda.

Before beginning this project, Abigail Morgan came to my EDP 486 course to discuss

different resources available via the library. This experience prepared me to use the library

database in conjunction with Google Scholar to locate articles and using a subject-specific

database such as Education Research Complete (ERC) to narrow results.

After meeting with Dr. Wasburn-Moses to discuss the criteria of the project, discussing

goals, research processes, and key search terms; I began to use the library database and Google

Scholar to search for articles. I instead found the largest challenge of the project, as the results

given when searing our topic were too exhaustive to review. After refocusing my search on

identifying a key term relevant to our project's purpose, I found that the term "office discipline

referrals" was common in relevant sources. Nonetheless, searches including this term were still

too exhaustive for an individual search using the library database. I then switched to the ERC

database. This database in conjunction with my new search term led to a navigable number of results.

The next stage involved hand-searching the abstracts of the articles found in the search, using the criteria that each article should involve a positive, practical and alternative model of discipline to exclusionary discipline. What I found in this search was that most articles in my discipline involved the Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) disciplinary approach. PBIS is a school-wide behavior management system that requires extensive training for successful implementation. As PBIS is not feasible for most schools to implement easily, I decided that it would not be a practical intervention to outline for administrators. Due to the unexpected lack of practical interventions within the Special Education field, I searched related disciplines (eg., psychology, social sciences, pediatrics) seeking simple and practical interventions.

During the cross-disciplinary search, I began to organize my notes into categories. I then analyzed a few articles within each category in an annotated bibliography. During this analysis, I discovered an innovative intervention tool, the Muse. The Muse is a brain-sensing headband that translates the wearer's brainwaves into sounds that guide them in meditation. Research has shown that the Muse can have a positive impact on a behavioral student's ability to focus, cope with unexpected events/outcomes, and even lower referrals to the office (Martinez & Zhao, 2018). Emerging from my searches, annotations and cross-disciplinary inquiries, I identified four positive interventions plausible for most schools to implement: restorative practices, check-in/check-out, mindfulness-based interventions, and cognitive interventions.

The next step was to construct an outline for a manuscript, drafting up the key sections and how each intervention will be discussed. The targeted audience of my piece was educational administrators, which meant my writing approach needed to focus on providing an accessible and concise piece. Therefore, the key sections of this outline included clear definitions, strengths, limitations, examples, recommendations, and sources of more information for each plausible intervention in practitioner-friendly language. Completing the outline involved filling in gaps in my existing sources, through a more targeted search. During this search, I found that some publications relevant to my research were outside of the library database. However, I did discover that the library could provide indirect access to books and publications outside of the library domain through the OhioLINK and ILLiad services. These services were immensely valuable for completing my outline, helping me access articles such as an article on Mindfulness interventions by Zolkoski and Lewis-Chiu (2019).

As the gaps in my outline began to fill the last stage of my paper began; the process of turning my outline into a polished manuscript. Classmates, professors in my education program and Dr. Wasburn-Moses gave strong constructive feedback on my manuscript. After many revisions, the manuscript was ready for submission. I sent the final manuscript entitled "Alternatives to Exclusionary School Discipline: An Administrator's Toolkit" to *Educational Leadership*; a prominent journal for school administrators where it is currently under review for publication.

My discovery of the Muse has led to many new opportunities and greatly influenced Dr. Wasburn-Moses's work. After discussing the merits of the Muse with Dr. Wasburn-Moses we drafted a collaborative research agenda for 2020. Dr. Wasburn-Moses and I applied for several

awards and grants and received an EHS grant and USS funding. In the fall, I helped lead a focus group of educational administrators seeking their perspectives on in-school-suspension (ISS). This focus group helped solidify our use of the Muse as an intervention tool and ISS as a possible environment for implementation. Currently, I am interviewing ISS supervisors in the local community and conducting another focus group of educational administrators in an independent study. The purpose of the interviews and second focus group is to introduce both groups to the Muse gathering constructive feedback for a summer pilot. This pilot is the focus of my USS project where we will use the Muse to help at-risk youth with significant behavioral challenges. Our agenda concludes with full-scale implementation of the Muse in a local school district in Fall 2020.

Overall, this project has influenced my time at Miami much more than I had anticipated. My discoveries from the library have led thus far too many new research opportunities, impacted my faculty mentor's research immensely, and is preparing me to pursue a graduate degree in School Psychology upon graduation.