

**Validation of the *Assessment of Culturally and Contextually Relevant Supports (ACCRoS)*:
Supporting Educators of Diverse Students with or at Risk for Disabilities**

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Abstract

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) requires state and local education agencies receiving federal funds to collect and analyze data to determine if certain racial and ethnic groups are being disproportionately (a) *identified* as needing special education services, (b) *placed* in more restrictive educational settings, as well as (c) *disciplined* and excluded from the learning environment (e.g., suspended, expelled). IDEA (2004) also specifies that if significant disproportionality is determined, practices and procedures must be reviewed and revised to focus on prevention and reverse noted trends. Yet, the law provides little guidance about how to do this.

Often, inappropriate decisions about identification, placement, and discipline occur only after a teacher makes a request for external support (e.g., referral for special education evaluation, referral to principal's office for disciplinary action). Improving teacher training and professional development to be prevention-focused, data-analytical and considerate of cultural and contextual factors that may impact students' learning and behavior might reduce the number of inappropriate referrals for special education and disciplinary action, addressing existing patterns of disproportionality in this country. As such, the aim of this proposed project is to further develop and validate the *Assessment of Culturally and Contextually Relevant Supports (ACCRoS)* for use in the training and *professional development of teachers and related services providers* who support CLD students (aged kindergarten through Grade 12) with disabilities or at risk for disabilities.

There are **two primary goals** of the project proposed below. **One goal** is to engage in scholarly activities that will produce research useful for providing professional development to teachers of CLD students with (or at risk) disabilities. The aim is that teachers will use data from the instrument developed to identify the need(s) for strengthening their (a) use of evidence-based culturally and contextually relevant academic and behavioral classroom *practices*, (b) ability to utilize *data* to make educational decisions, and (c) access to training/support *systems* for consistent and durable implementation of practices. Data produced from this instrument will be linked to efforts to affect a range of student outcomes, including rates of academic engagement in the classroom (immediate) and disproportional identification for special education services (longitudinal). Project activities are sequenced across four years. Prior to Year 1 (i.e., in FY16), seed grant funds will be used to engage in activities including establishing the instrument's content validity and conducting an exploratory factor analysis. In Year 1, the emphasis will be on establishing internal reliability (including conducting confirmatory factor analysis) and finalizing the instrument, test manual and scoring guide. In Year 2, field testing the instrument will result in teachers' self-assessment data being correlated with observations of their own classroom practice as well as student outcome data to determine criterion-related validity. In Years 3 and 4, further field testing will occur using experimental single case design methodology.

The **second goal** is to be mentored by three established researchers to gain advanced competencies related to (a) rigorous instrument development and validation, (b) innovative quantitative research design and data analysis, as well as (c) the efficient coordination of a comprehensive, multi-year project. This opportunity for mentorship and external funding will be used to address a deficit in the literature base and advancing a focused research agenda that will be pursued for several decades as a career scholar in the field. **The four-year project is proposed to begin on September 1, 2017 and cost \$398,722 to complete.**