A Proposal

District Progress Through Systematic Program and Process Evaluation: Continuous Quality Improvement Is Possible for Schools

In Response To

A Request for Proposal Made By

The Ohio State University/Urban Schools Initiative
1501 Neil Avenue
Suite 020
Columbus-The University District Schools, Ohio 43201

Submitted By

Anne Marie Thomas, Ph.D.

Research, Evaluation, and Data Analysis
Consultation Service
The School of Educational Policy and Leadership
College of Education
The Ohio State University

August 12, 1999
The Ohio State University
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An Open Letter to the OSU/USI Committee

Dear Committee Members, August 12, 1999

Systematic evaluation and assessment are key skills school districts need if they are to succeed and deliver high quality educations to the children of the 21st Century. The scope of work on systematic assessment, as defined within this proposal, was developed after meeting with the school districts. This was done in order to truly meet district needs and develop a proposal that could be supported by Evelyn Altherr of Mansfield City Schools, Pam Early of South-Western City Schools, and Columbus-The University District Schools. These urban Central Ohio school districts appear eager and ready to take on the challenge of learning systematic assessment skills and techniques. Moreover, in the conversations with South-Western City Schools, Columbus-The University District Schools, and Mansfield City Schools, it was apparent that they view the success of this piece of the Urban Initiative Martha Holden Jennings Foundation grant money as very important to the growth and future successes of their programs and school districts.

The activities and procedures of this project, as detailed in the proposal, are good starts to learning and engaging in true systematic assessment. However, the learning activities are constricted by time and cost. In addition, the districts discussed the possibility of more intense time and contacts. As the Principal Investigator, I have written this grant proposal under the published grant guidelines and in accordance with the budgetary parameters detailed within those guidelines. The Research, Evaluation, and Measurement Data Analysis and Consultation Service that will ultimately support this project did attempt to identify other matching funds, but was not successful. Nonetheless, the Consultation Service was willing to select other Consultation Service Funds to defray GRA Tuition and supply costs. Unfortunately, as an OSU earnings center, the Consultation Service is unable to volunteer human resources.

This proposal and the resulting assessment knowledge and skills to be gained by the school districts could be more detailed through expanded contacts. If deemed appropriate by the OSU/USI Committee, this proposal is open to negotiations. These negotiations could include the inclusion of the Springfield School district and additional human resource contacts by the Principal Investigator and the research team. We are open to modifications and suggestions in both platform and budget that will aid the Urban Initiative in succeeding in improving the Urban school districts of Central Ohio.

Sincerely,

Anne Marie Thomas, Ph.D.
Operations Manager
Research, Evaluation, and Measurement Data Analysis and Consultation Service
School of Educational Policy and Leadership
INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

President Clinton has asked Congress to revive, renew, and combine the principles of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) and Goals 2000: Educate America Act through the Educational Excellence for All Children Act (1999). The 1999 proposal discusses goals that promote high quality schools through defined standards, improved teacher and principal quality, safe and drug-free environments, and the overarching expectation that ALL children can and should reach high standards. The proposal suggests that defined, measurable performance standards, and continuous quality improvement principles adhered to in school buildings are key to realizing the proposal goals. The proposal defends these assertions by citing remarkable improvement in National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicators in Texas and North Carolina where measurement and continuous improvement have been the focus of their state education systems during the 1990s (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

Across the United States, there are a multitude of programs put in place everyday through federal, state, and local funding to aid schools in realizing the high quality environments envisioned in the Educational Excellence for All Children Act (1999). However, education has long been searching for the appropriate implementation and evaluation model to ensure that the programs and processes are enacted in such a way that result in goal attainment (Daugherty, 1996; Wiedmer, 1997). The principles of Deming and Juran identified in continuous quality improvement (CQI) or total quality management (TQM) platforms in business and industry have been cited in the educational literature as the future of quality education in the United States (Blankenstein, 1992; Rankin, 1992; Horine, Lindgren & Yvarra, 1994; Daugherty, 1996; Leonard, 1996; McClennen & Ingersoll, 1997; Wiedmer, 1997; Schmidt, 1998; Horine, Edmister, & Frazier, 1998). The broad CQI principles that have been primarily focused on in the educational literature are teacher, student, and parent empowerment, school building teamwork or collaboration, and customer satisfaction especially in terms of parents and students. Less of a focus or in some cases even missing from the education CQI frameworks are the principles of strategic planning, continual systematic assessment, and a commitment to on-going improvement. A 1998 study of 30 school district CQI programs and their leadership utilizing Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Education Pilot criteria, cited
information and analysis and educational and business process and planning management as the weakest links (Horine et al., 1998).

Systematic assessment or evaluation is the key in organizational improvement efforts if they are to result in programs and processes ultimately leading to high quality operations. However, education has a long and turbulent history with program evaluation that has caused a backlash against positivistic evaluations resulting in summative judgements (Popham, 1988; Worthen & Sanders, 1991). Furthermore, mixed model program evaluation methodology utilizing both qualitative and quantitative measures with a focus on formative findings rather than judgements are still viewed negatively by the educational community (Stake, 1985; Popham, 1988; Worthen & Sanders, 1991). Nevertheless, without program evaluation or assessment, outcomes improvement or more specific to this case, improved teaching and learning, is not possible. The educational literature and the pilot results from the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Education criteria suggest that systematic assessment, evaluation, and data gathering and usage, at the very heart of CQI efforts in business and industry, are challenges even for the most innovative school districts.

The Ohio school districts of Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City Schools have developed and enacted programs and processes to ensure that their efforts result in high quality education for all children. In many cases, the programs were developed collaboratively and with the input of program stakeholders as suggested by experts in educational evaluation such as Stake (1985) and Worthen and Sanders (1991) and much like CQI program development in business and industry. Nevertheless, at these local levels, that fundamental piece of systematic program evaluation has been missing. As a result, these school districts often question whether or not their programs are actually high quality, reaching their intended goals, could be improved or are making the difference necessary to result in the ultimate goal of high quality learning for all children.

**PROPOSAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The many programs that schools districts put into place must be evaluated for efficacy if schools are to realize their missions (Popham, 1991). Teaching school districts to systematically assess is the key to ensuring efficient programs in the future. Nonetheless, if such an endeavor is to succeed, selecting the most appropriate medium and culture for this learning is fundamental. While many professional development activities rely on lecture and reading materials, the act of “learning
by doing” is often missing. However, many learn best through doing or activity engagement (Stiggins, 1997). Taking Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City Schools through the steps and procedures of a quality systematic program assessment, in a lab setting, will provide them with the appropriate medium and culture. In this way, they might obtain the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct future systematic program evaluations and become true CQI organizations.

Finally, this effort to educate teachers and administrators in systematic assessment offers rich inquiry opportunities. First, during the lab sessions, inquiry through observation and field notes will allow the research team to assess the level of district cultural openness and growth levels necessary to make systematic and on-going assessment a part of all programs (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Weade and Everston, 1991). Finally, future academic years would allow the research team to follow-up the districts and assess both skill impact and room for skill improvement utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods. The specifics of the future of this project will be discussed at the end of this proposal.

**OBJECTIVES**

This project is designed to teach Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City Schools, the evaluation skills necessary to continually and systematically assess their many programs. More specifically, the project objectives are designed to:

1. To analyze Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City Schools’ programs data in order to identify the best data for indicator development or performance standard measurement;
2. To design and engage in multi-contact systematic assessment and data usage instructional labs for administrators and teachers in Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City School districts;
3. To ensure that teachers and administrators in the Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City School districts understand the basic concepts of systematic program assessment or evaluation including but not limited to data analysis, goal analysis, indicator development, monitoring, and on-going evaluation and measurement;
4. To take Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City Schools through systematic assessment procedures including data analysis, indicator development, the steps of monitoring, and evaluation utilizing program specific data from each of the districts;

5. To provide teachers and administrators in the Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City School districts with blank templates for future use in program planning and evaluation activities;

6. To have the Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City School teachers and administrators develop action plans based upon the assessment procedures, that communicate the future directions of the district programs;

7. To have the Principal Investigator provide a final report that includes a narrative of the Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City School districts processes and systematic assessment learning activities as well as recommendations to facilitate on-going learning and skill enhancement in systematic assessment of programs.

DESIGN AND PROCEDURES OF THE SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT LEARNING LABS

The purpose of this project is to provide systematic assessment skills and tools that will improve the future of program planning and evaluation in the Ohio urban districts of Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City Schools. The first procedure will be to review program specific data for each of the districts. The data will be analyzed in order for the Principal Investigator to identify opportunities for indicator development prior to engaging the district personnel in data analysis and indicator development activities. Second, an overview of the purpose and goals of the systematic assessment learning activities will be presented to the teachers and administrators of each district. At the end of the opening session, the district specific teachers and administrators will be asked to dialogue on perceived challenges or barriers to enacting program assessments in the systematic manner presented. This information will be chronicled, evaluated, and utilized wherever appropriate in subsequent skill development labs.
While each district will have a specific contact schedule of activities for the 1999-2000 academic year, there will be one data assessment meeting, four skill development labs, and a final activity debriefing. The skill development labs will be conducted in multiple sessions in order to form a relationship with educators. Individual lab session foci are provided at the end of this section. During the final activity debriefing the Principal Investigator will aid each district in identifying the next steps in honing their skills on other district programs. District specific scenarios based upon the initial data gathering, guidelines contained in State of Ohio’s Planning Guide for Developing Continuous Improvement Plans offered through The Ohio Department of Education (ODE), and literature based educational program evaluation and program planning models and materials will be used as activity or lesson planning sources (Stake, 1985; Popham, 1988).

The Principal Investigator and in some labs, graduate students will take observation notes. The observation notes will be utilized both formatively and summatively (Popham, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Weade & Everston, 1991). First, the notes will be utilized where appropriate as a basis for future lab activities or session dialogues. The notes will then be analyzed for each district’s personal use and used for the development of recommendations concerning the future of program planning and assessment within each district.

For the final OSU/USI Committee report, the information from the data analysis, session feedback, and graduate student and Principal Investigator observations will be organized and analyzed. A report will be prepared that offers district specific and more generic information concerning the successes of the program evaluations the learning labs were based upon. Further, the future of systematic program assessment or evaluation in each district will be discussed in detail. The report will close with recommendations for improving systematic assessment and evaluation procedures.
PROPOSED LAB TOPICS*

Lab Session One

_Analyze Your Program and the Data: What Data Do You Have and What Matters?_
Concepts include: program goals, district mission and data matching, performance indicators, process indicators, and how these relate to future program planning and evaluation activities

Lab Session Two

_Analyze Your Data for Strengths and Challenges_
Concepts include: environmental scanning, stakeholder evaluation, and strategic decision-making

Lab Session Three

_Analyze Your Data for an Emerging Action Plan_
Concepts include: action planning, brainstorming, idea mapping, PINS strategy, strategy evaluations, task identification, and implementation

Lab Session Four

_Analyze Your Program Continuously: How to Grow from Here_
Concepts include: monitoring, constant assessment is key, and evaluation as the norm instead of another duty

*Sessions will be focused on individual district need

ANTICIPATED PRODUCT DELIVERABLES

Learning lab assessment activity templates
Summary of learning lab observations for each district: Columbus-The University District School Observations, Mansfield City School Observations, and South-Western City School Observations
A final report with analyses, discussion, and recommendations
An Executive Summary of the final report
Disk(s) of the Executive Summary and Final Report

TIMELINE

In an effort to manage and maintain a project of this magnitude, the Principal Investigator has developed a comprehensive timetable. The specific objectives of the project and anticipated
deliverable products are organized around specific completion dates. These objectives and products and their corresponding target dates are subject to changes and modification based upon the needs of the Urban Initiative, the school district personnel, and the Principal Investigator. The objectives and their target completion dates follow on the next page.
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<th><strong>TIMELINE</strong></th>
<th><strong>Date Targeted for Completion</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1) To analyze Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City Schools’ programs data in order to identify the best data for indicator development or performance standard measurement;</td>
<td>OCTOBER 1999</td>
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<td>2) To design and engage in multi-contact assessment and data usage instructional labs for administrators and teachers in Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City Schools districts;</td>
<td>DESIGN COMPLETION: OCTOBER 1999 CONTACTS: NOVEMBER-JUNE 2000</td>
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<td>3) To ensure that teachers and administrators in Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City School districts understand the basic concepts of systematic program assessment or evaluation including but not limited to data analysis, goal analysis, indicator development, monitoring, and on-going evaluation and measurement;</td>
<td>CONTACTS: NOVEMBER 1999-JUNE 2000</td>
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<td>4) To take Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City Schools, and South-Western City Schools through systematic assessment procedures including data analysis, indicator development, the steps of monitoring, and evaluation utilizing program specific data from each of the districts;</td>
<td>CONTACTS: NOVEMBER 1999-JUNE 2000</td>
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<td>5) To provide teachers and administrators in Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City School, and South-Western City School districts with blank templates for future use in program planning and evaluation activities;</td>
<td>FINAL LABS: APRIL 2000-JUNE 2000</td>
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<td>6) To have Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City School, and South-Western City School teachers and administrators develop action plans based upon the assessment procedures, that communicate the future direction of the district programs;</td>
<td>FINAL LABS: APRIL 2000-JUNE 2000</td>
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<td>7) To have the Principal Investigator provide a final report that includes a narrative of Columbus-The University District Schools, Mansfield City School, and South-Western City School districts processes and systematic assessment learning activities as well as recommendations to facilitate on-going learning and skill enhancement in systematic assessment of programs;</td>
<td>ANALYSIS: JUNE 2000 REPORT WRITING: JULY 2000-AUGUST 2000 FINAL REPORT: SEPTEMBER 2000</td>
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PROJECT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Principal Investigator: Anne Marie Thomas, Ph.D.  (10% FTE)

Dr. Thomas was formerly the Director of Quality Improvement Services at Children’s Hospital Columbus where she educated clinical department heads, physicians, and administrators on program and process assessment strategies and techniques and aided them in skill development. Further, Dr. Thomas has experience conducting educational research and teaching courses for both The Ohio State University and Columbus State Community College. She has taught graduate courses in assessment and substitute taught for courses in statistics, survey research, and measurement through a section in the School called the Quantitative Educational Research, Evaluation, and Measurement. Further, Dr. Thomas is the Operations Manager for the Research, Evaluation, and Measurement Data Analysis and Consultation Service in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership (ED P&L) in the College of Education at The Ohio State University. This service regularly undertakes both large and small projects of the size and scope proposed herein. Currently, the consultation service is conducting five existing projects and has the capacity and personnel to successfully conduct the proposed project. Dr Thomas reports to the Faculty Director of the Consultation Service.

Graduate Research Assistant (GRA): To Be Announced (TBA) (50% FTE)

This person will be responsible for all lab session preparations including collecting research literature, routine project duties, lab observations, data entry, basic data analyses, assembling project data, procedural write-ups of project activities, and other necessary duties associated with helping to successfully complete the project in a satisfactory and timely fashion. This person reports to Dr. Thomas.

Graduate Research Assistant (GRA): To Be Announced (TBA) (25% FTE)

This person will support the other GRA in lab session preparations and be responsible for collecting research literature, routine project duties, lab observations, data entry, basic data analyses, assembling project data, procedural write-ups of project activities, and other necessary duties associated with helping to successfully complete the project in a satisfactory and timely fashion. This person reports to Dr. Thomas.

Project Clerical Specialist: Ms. Barbara Heinlein (25% for 1 Month)

The clerical person will be responsible for routine clerical duties including the formatting of text for written reports, and word processing of the final reports. She will report to the Principal Investigator.
**RESEARCH ETHICS**

We, the research and analysis team, will conduct the project in accordance with the canons of sound and ethical educational research as specified in the Standards of Educational Evaluation and as codified through the Standard Research Practices of the American Psychological Association. We will conduct monthly staff meetings and will keep minutes of these meetings. In addition, we will file quarterly reports of our progress to the Urban Initiative and complete the project scope of work in a complete, satisfactory, and timely fashion by September 2000. Following completion of the project, we will provide the Urban Initiative with a complete report, and a copy of the on computer readable disk(s). Further, for confidentiality purposes only each district will receive a copy of the research team’s observation notes and corresponding analyses. The more general reports and data will become the property of the Urban Initiative. However, we retain the right to publish the results in mutually agreeable professional outlet(s). We are agreeable to negotiate and revise this contract in ways that are mutually agreeable to the Urban Initiative and the Principal Investigator.

**BUDGET AND BUDGET JUSTIFICATION**

Proposed Budget for this Research 9/99-9/00

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<tr>
<th>PERSONNEL</th>
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<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator (PH.D.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate Research Associate (TBA)</td>
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<td>Graduate Research Associate (TBA)</td>
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<td>Clerical Support (Heinlein)</td>
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Subtotal $xx,xxx

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<th>BENEFITS</th>
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<tr>
<td>A&amp;P</td>
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<td>Graduate Student Stipend</td>
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<td>Clerical Staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRA Tuition/Fees for 25% Appointment</td>
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<tr>
<td>(GRA Tuition/Fees for 50% of $xxx/per month will be paid for by other Consultation Service Funds)</td>
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Subtotal $x,xxx

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<th>OPERATING</th>
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<tr>
<td>Travel Expenses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lab Supplies, Materials, Technological Supports</td>
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<td>(The total for this category of supplies is actually $2,000-this will be paid for by Consultation Service Funds)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reproduction</td>
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<td>Telephone/Communications</td>
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Subtotal $x,xxx

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<th>TOTAL PROJECT COSTS</th>
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BUDGET JUSTIFICATION AND BUDGET FLEXIBILITY

The Ohio State University salary and benefit schedule was followed in estimating these charges. The personnel specified in the budget will be needed to successfully complete the project. This is especially true of the GRA time and support. The GRA preparation support and lab session debriefing time for observation analyses will allow the school districts high quality lab sessions. Further, the Consultation Service considers this project important enough to expend other Consultation Service dollars on the 50% GRA appointment Tuition and Fees and $1,200 on supplies, materials, and technological supports. The other cost estimates are for the proposed scope of work for the three school districts for a maximum of six contacts per site in addition to the project deliverables. As stated in the Open Letter to the Committee at the beginning of this proposal, negotiations are welcomed. Given the human resource time available according to the cost specifications of the OSU/USI Proposal, the Principal Investigator and her research team would remain open and available for further negotiation of additional contact hours if the funding could be justified by the OSU/USI Committee.

THE FUTURE OF THE SYSTEMATIC ASSESSMENT PROJECT

The possibilities for both inquiry and future growth are many when considering year one of this project. The second year would bring a follow-up study that would keep the districts engaged with systematic program assessment and identify other supports the districts might need to keep their program assessments high quality. The mixed model methods used to conduct such a follow-up would include a survey of participants as well as visits that would have the Principal Investigator observe program evaluations as they were occurring. The third year would require the school districts to utilize their knowledge and skills of systematic assessment in program planning. The Principal Investigator would have the school districts go through each step of strategic program planning with an engrained evaluation component. The fourth and fifth years would require the schools districts to utilize their product and process indicators to identify programs that could serve as exemplars of systematic assessment or program planning and evaluation. The Principal Investigator would then collaborate with the school districts to create exemplar narratives that could be shared with other districts and utilized by individual school buildings as they plan processes and programs on a smaller scale.
VITA
for
Anne Marie Thomas, Ph.D.

Office: The Ohio State University
College of Education
School of Educational Policy and Leadership
310 Ramseyer Hall
29 W. Woodruff Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1177
(614) 292-3239

Home: 3247 Rainier Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43231
(614) 899-6237

Research Emphasis/Professional Interest
Research, Measurement and Evaluation in Education and Industry for Program Development and Improvement; Research Design; Test Design and Evaluation; Alternative Student Assessment Strategies; Measurement and Statistical Methods; Survey Research Methodology; and Teacher and Teacher Education Program Evaluation

Education

1998 The Ohio State University, Ph.D. in Quantitative Research, Evaluation and Measurement in Education; Substantive Emphasis in K-12 Administration, Curriculum Studies and Teacher Education

1996 The Ohio State University, M.A. in Quantitative Research, Evaluation and Measurement in Education

1993 The Ohio State University, B.S. in Allied Medicine with a Certification in Health Information Management

Employment History
January 1999-Present
Operations Manager, Research, Evaluation, and Measurement Data Analysis and Consultation Service, The Ohio State University

Instructor, Quantitative Research, Evaluation, and Measurement in Education Section, School of Educational Policy and Leadership, The Ohio State University

-Responsible for securing research funding for the Consultation Service; Responsible for budgetary activities and ensuring Consultation Service fiscal solvency; Responsible
for Research Consultation Including Design, Instrument Development and Analysis; Report and Proposal Writing; Course Instruction and Instructional Support; Training Graduate Research Associates in Related Areas of Expertise; Program Area Graduate Student Personnel Management

1995-1998
Instructor for the Health Information Management Technology Section, Columbus State Community College

- Responsible for Course Design and Instruction; Test and Assessment Construction; and Student Counseling

1995-1998
Research and Teaching Associate for the Quantitative Research, Evaluation and Measurement Section in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership, The Ohio State University,

- Responsible for Research Consultation Including Design, Instrument Development and Analysis; Knowledge of Statistical Software; Course Instruction and Instructional Support; Training Other Graduate Research Associates in Related Areas of Expertise; and Program Area Graduate Student Counseling and Support

1993-1995
Director of Quality Improvement Services, Children's Hospital Columbus, Ohio,

- Responsible for the Direction and Management of 10 Professional and 4 Support Service FTEs; Direction of Hospital Accreditation (State, Federal and JCAHO) Activities Inclusive of Budgetary Responsibility; Development of Hospital Quality Indicators; Development of Health Care System Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Teams; Direction of Hospital-wide Departmental Program and Process Evaluations; Direction of the Parent/Patient Satisfaction Survey and Program; Direction of the Utilization Review Program; Risk Management Prevention Activities; Direction of 3 Medical Staff/Administrative Committees; and Health Care System-wide Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Planning Education

Conference Presentations and Professional Publications


REFERENCES


College Student Journal. 31 (3), 51-68.


