Key Features of Research Practice Partnerships in Higher Education Highlighted in New Report

Student survey provides insightful feedback on equity practices in courses that incorporate digital learning

Boulder, CO (February 22, 2023) – Research shows that culturally responsive teaching practice and digital learning tools have the potential to transform teaching and advance equitable learning and student success. Yet notable gaps in practice undercut its impact. A new report, *Partnering to Promote Equity and Digital Learning*, developed by Every Learner Everywhere in partnership with Digital Promise, describes a 15-month collaboration between three Every Learner Everywhere partner organizations and five colleges, together engaged in a research-practice partnership (RPP) around enhancing equity and digital leaning in gateway courses.

The RPP was led by three partner organizations, Achieving the Dream (ATD), the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and Digital Promise, and included five institutional partners, Borough of Manhattan Community College, Harper College, Jackson State University, New Mexico State University, and University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Motivated by the desire to fill gaps in our understanding of how to integrate culturally responsive practice and digital learning tools to promote equitable outcomes, the partners wanted to work together to go beyond high-level abstract descriptions of desirable features of instruction (e.g., "inclusive" and "technology-supported") to elucidate and try out specific practices that designers and instructors could implement. The team at each higher education institution selected one or more of their high-enrollment gateway courses as the focus for their Equity and Digital Learning work, examining student data for the course, brainstorming course improvement ideas, and laying the groundwork for implementing a revised version of the course in spring 2022.

The report, co-authored by Digital Promise researchers Korah Wiley, Ph.D, Learning Sciences Researcher, Julie Neisler, Ph.D., Quantitative Researcher for the Learning Sciences Research, and Barbara Means, Ph.D., Executive Director of Learning Sciences Research, promotes collaborations between educational practitioners and educational researchers looking to examine objective evidence, identify potential ways of addressing problems of practice, try new approaches, and collect and analyze data on the new approaches to teaching and learning.

"From an education researcher's perspective, this partnership was an opportunity to put research skills into direct service of students," said Barbara Means, principal investigator for the project. "Our college partners were determined to improve course experiences and outcomes for students from groups that have felt marginalized in college courses in the past, and they welcomed support for collecting and interpreting data from students."

Report highlights:

- Guidance on setting up research-practice-partnerships and recruiting partners
- Specific examples of RPP equity and digital learning activities
- Examples of digital learning implementation plans
- Student feedback on equity practices in courses that incorporate digital learning
- Faculty feedback on the experience of participating in an RPP
- Downloadable and customizable document tools for organizations setting up RPPs

Lead author, Korah Wiley, says of the RPP, "Equity and Digital Learning institutional teams made solid progress in making the spring 2022 course experience more positive for minoritized students and students from low-income backgrounds." She notes, however, that despite a more positive learning experience, in only a few of the courses did student grades also improve. "More research-practice partnerships are needed in order to help us understand how to best support racially minoritized students and students from low-income backgrounds."

To ground the RPP work in student needs, Digital Promise developed and supported the administration and analysis of a student survey focused on equity and digital learning. The Equity in Digital Learning Survey (EDLS) solicited students' course experiences and perspectives related to course quality, digital learning practices and challenges, and equity and inclusion practices.

To download the free resource, *Partnering to Promote Equity and Digital Learning*, or learn more about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to equitize higher education through digital learning, visit everylearnereverywhere.org. To contact Every Learner Everywhere, email everylearner@wiche.edu, or call (303) 541-0208. Follow Every Learner on Twitter @EveryLearnerNet.

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Every Learner Everywhere is a network of partner organizations with expertise in evaluating, implementing, scaling, and measuring the efficacy of education technologies, curriculum and course design strategies, teaching practices, and support services that personalize instruction for students in blended and online learning environments. Our mission is to help institutions use new technology to innovate teaching and learning, with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous students, poverty-affected students, and first-generation students. Our collaborative work aims to advance equity in higher education centered on the transformation of postsecondary teaching and learning. We build capacity in colleges and universities to improve student outcomes with digital learning through direct technical assistance, timely resources and toolkits, and ongoing analysis of institutional practices and market trends. For more information about Every Learner Everywhere and its collaborative approach to equitize higher education through digital learning, visit everylearnereverywhere.org.

Digital Promise is a global nonprofit working to expand opportunity for every learner. We work with educators, researchers, technology leaders, and communities to design, investigate, and scale innovations that support learners, especially those who've been historically and systematically excluded. For more information, visit the Digital Promise website and follow @DigitalPromise for updates.