

## Teaching Load Reduction Grant Report

Jennifer Groman, PhD – The Creativity Project 3

### **Project Proposal Overview and the Project's Evolution**

My Spring, 2021, “Creativity Project 3” research was meant to focus on the impact of creativity training on creative self-efficacy in teachers, and the impact of creative self-efficacy on teachers’ ability to support and have confidence in supporting creativity in the classroom. My plan included the creation of a 16-week Professional Development course in Creativity through Founders School, where teachers would learn the Piiro model of creativity (the Core Attitudes and Seven I’s, and other aspects of the creative process), research aspects of the model that appealed to them, create and teach a lesson, and evaluate it. Those lessons, then, would become part of a Creativity Project Practical Workbook.

I had hoped for and planned on 15 to 20 participants, who could earn 45 contact hours of PD credit or 3 credit hours to participate in the course. In addition to the lessons for the workbook, these participants would gather data from students in their classrooms to determine if there were any changes in creative self-efficacy as a result of targeted lessons in creativity using Piiro’s model.

In reality, after extensive outreach and advertisement, I had only two interested students who enrolled in the PD. They were both former graduates of the Talent Development program at AU, and so had already taken the intensive creativity course (EDIS 654), and wanted the opportunity to use what they had learned in the classroom. With this in mind, I was compelled to differentiate the PD and the project to their skills and needs. We were able to enhance and deepen their knowledge and interaction with the creativity model. [Here is a link to the syllabus](#) for that PD course.

Over the 16 weeks, the three of us had face-to-face meetings:

\*January 29, 2022, 9:30-2:30 in Schar COE for advanced creativity training activities and discussion about their specific project plans;

\*February 26, 2022, 9:30-1:00 in Schar COE as a check-in to practice more creativity training, work on project lessons, share ideas, and outline the annotated bibliography;

\*May 14, 2022, 9:30-1:00 at my home in Wooster to debrief and talk about their lessons with students and next steps.

At this final meeting we all shared what we wanted as an outcome to this project, because the “Practical” Workbook suddenly became im-Practical. Cheryl stated that she wanted some type of presentation and practical aspect to share with her colleagues/teachers about incorporating

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creativity into their classrooms, and Sharon stated that she wanted some type of presentation and practical aspect to share with her administration to get their support in improving teachers support for creativity in the classroom, and I hoped we could create and present something to a wider audience to share what we had learned, and to show the University the work we had done over the semester.

The team decided to propose a session and present at the “Creativity in Today’s Classroom” Symposium, sponsored by the Educational Service Center of Lorain County and the Ohio Citizens for the Arts on Thursday, August 11, 2022. We opted to get an AirBnB in Lorain so we could spend time the night before practicing our presentation and then attend and present at the event.

Here is a link to the event. It is a continuation of Oberlin Center for the Arts (now closed) “Creativity in the Classroom Symposium,” which started in 2019. I have been active in presenting at this symposium since its inception and am an invited speaker.

<https://www.loraincountyesc.org/protected/EventRegistration.aspx?rCode=4Y030>

Our presentation is titled: “Mandalas in the Classroom: Creativity for Stressed Out Teachers Who Don’t Feel Creative”

The session description:

*We don’t have to tell you how stressful teaching has become. But we have found a strategy for teaching students self-regulation and creativity skills within the mathematical world of patterns, using Mandalas. Mandalas, a Sanskrit word roughly translated to mean “circles,” are meditative tools which can be found in man-made objects as well as in nature. Jennifer (a University professor), Cheryl (a gifted specialist working with early elementary students), and Sharon (an art teacher working with upper elementary and middle grades) will each share ideas on drawing Mandalas with students of various ages to support their creativity, curiosity, emotional wellbeing, and to teach patterns of shapes and lines. Mandalas in the classroom encourage creative concepts such as improvisation, insight, intuition, risk-taking, and group trust, and can support even the most exhausted teacher who does not believe they are creative.*

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We may also propose this presentation for the December Ohio Association for Gifted Children's Teacher Academy.

### **Project Proposed Outcomes and the Outcome's Evolution**

My original outcomes were as follows.

\*I planned to produce an electronic document/workbook for coordinators and teachers, to be made available free of charge through multiple venues (ideas include AU's website, my own website, Ohio Association for Gifted Children website and events). This workbook will contain:

- specific strategies for multiple concepts in creativity training;

- Written Education Plan information and wording ideas for multiple areas and grades in creative thinking ability;

- Other support documents and information that may emerge from the work as appropriate (a summary of research, bibliography, etc.).

\*I planned to create and present a breakout conference session for the 2021 OAGC Fall Conference.

\*Ashland University and I will experience an enhanced connection to Ohio K-12 districts and their gifted programs, which may result in more graduate students joining the AU Gifted Endorsement or MEd program.

The project actual final outcomes were as follows:

\*Cheryl and Sharon both incorporated elements of creativity (insight, meditation, incubation) into activities with their students that used mandalas as a stress reduction technique and as a springboard to talk about other aspects of creativity and integrate patterns and geometry;

\*Cheryl, Sharon, and I are producing a presentation that will be shared with a wider Northeastern Ohio educational community at the "Creativity in Today's Classroom," incorporating Lorain County Educational Service Center (ESC) and Ohio Citizens for the Arts;

\*I am an invited speaker to that conference and will present a session overview of the Piirto model of creativity as an introduction to our combined presentation.

For my own current and future research on creativity and creative self-efficacy, a great deal of data were gathered:

\*Sharon and Cheryl collected a vast amount of anecdotal and observational data as they used these creative concepts with students;

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\*Sharon and Cheryl collected reflections and pre- and post-assessments by students (with parent permission);

\*I collected reflection and pre- and post-assessment data on Sharon and Cheryl as they worked through the semester, and audio-recorded our final session with their permission;

\*I collected my own reflections and pre- and post-assessment data on self-efficacy;

\*I collected anecdotal and observational data on the two participants as we worked through our in-person sessions together.

### **Project Proposed Final Product and Product's Evolution**

Sharon, Cheryl, and I are currently creating our presentation for August 11, 2022. If the Provost's office would like us to share the complete slides or a recording of the presentation, we can do so.

The 50-minute presentation will have three components.

- Jennifer's 10 minutes - I will do a short overview of the Piirto model and the project's original intention to enhance creative self-efficacy in teachers and students. I plan to share research about how creativity can enhance knowledge and skill outcomes in students and how the model we used can be integrated seamlessly into the classroom.
- Sharon's 15 minutes – Sharon will share her process for using art (specifically mandalas) as a therapeutic device (this was the topic of her recent MEd Thesis), and how she introduced mandalas to her students (who are multi-age, middle grade students), and their finished products.
- Cheryl's 15 minutes – Cheryl will share her process for introducing creativity and creativity concepts with a small group of students (Grade 2, primary students), and their process for working through mandalas, discussing aspects of patterns as well as social/emotional impact on stress reduction.
- 10 minutes for questions and to wrap up.

We also plan to propose a session at the December, 2022, OAGC Teacher Academy.

### **Project Final Product**

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The project final presentation is currently in-progress. We are meeting on Thursday, June 16, 2022, from 9:30-2:00 to work through our presentation. We will meet again on Wednesday, August 10, 2022, to practice at our AirBnB in Lorain. We present on Thursday, August 11, 2022.

This project turned out to be a Pilot Study instead of the full practical application workbook I had expected. As a Pilot Study, I learned a great deal for my future research on creative self-efficacy and creativity training for teachers. Two of the most important lessons I learned:

- Creative work using this model is a bit *messier* (ill-structured) than other creative theories. Other theories lend themselves to specific, self-contained activities that focus primarily on creativity. The Piirto theory does not work that way, so a workbook of practical applications might not be the best format to give teachers ideas for classroom use. At this time, I am not certain what format would work best, but a workbook is not reasonable. One of the Piirto Core Attitudes of the creative process is “tolerance for ambiguity”, so this should not have been a surprise to me.
- EDIS 654, the creativity course that is part of the Talent Development program at AU, is exactly what I should be using to research the deeper aspects of creativity training in teachers. The transformation that occurs in students while they are taking the course is what I should be studying, and using those graduate students’ ideas (with their permission, and giving them credit, of course!) for integration of the concepts into the classroom. To create a PD course that does the same thing is redundant;

With this new knowledge in mind, I wrote up and had accepted a new IRB proposal (The Creativity Project 4) to collect data from my current and future EDIS 654 students, using all assignments and reflections from the course as data, and including three survey instruments

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gauging teacher self-efficacy and creative self-efficacy. This will become a long-term investigation, and I may even have the opportunity for a more longitudinal study with these students as I continue to keep in touch and follow-up with them. I started this research project with my Summer A EDIS 654 class on May 9, and currently have three graduate students who have opted into the study. I teach this course twice a year, in Summer A and in Fall. You can see my [IRB proposal here](#). You can see my [Consent Form here](#).

### **In Closing**

I would like to take this occasion to thank the Provost's office and CITE for this grant opportunity. I loved having an entire semester in which I could put more focus on my research and writing, it has been especially useful as I am a junior faculty member. I received a great deal of support from the two graduate students who participated, Cheryl Kanuckle and Sharon Scott, and am pleased that we will continue to work together. I also received a great deal of support and accountability from my AURWC group, Mohsine Bensaid and Tracy Crum, and from my group leader, Paul Hyman. I could have viewed this project as a failure in many ways, considering my high hopes and practical workbook aspirations that did not materialize. My AURWC group convinced me to see the places of growth and learning from this work, and help me take on positive movement toward my next research study. I owe them a great deal, as well.

In addition to the research and writing for this project and the HSRB for the Creativity Project 4, I also

\*completed a final edit on a book chapter

\*coded qualitative data from past EDIS 654 course surveys on self-efficacy

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\*read Joey Saldana's *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* to help with the above coding

\*purchased and started reading Salkind and Frey's *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics* to help me as I selected surveys for my next research project

\*wrote and received an \$11,000 Martha Holden Jennings Grant application

\*wrote a \$5,250 CITE Innovative Teaching and Learning Grant application

\*wrote and had accepted two short articles for the *OAGC Review* (the publication of the Ohio Association for Gifted Children)

\*submitted and had accepted a presentation proposal for the national SENG (Serving the Emotional Needs of the Gifted) virtual conference

\*submitted a book chapter proposal (which was not accepted)

\*submitted a co-written book chapter proposal (the book was tabled for now)

\*submitted and had accepted a proposal for a presentation at the OAGC Fall Conference