**Background and Purpose**

This project built on the work of critical multicultural educators (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Morrell, 2005; Sleeter, 2005) to create a transformational educational framework designed to promote the retention, academic engagement and success, and potential for civic action in students from disenfranchised populations. Specifically, this project explored how the focus areas of (1) critical thinking; (2) multiculturalism and pluralism; and (3) capacity for civic action can be developed in undergraduate students at the junior and senior levels.

**Methodology**

An action research approach was used to complete this project. The following steps were taken during this project: (1) review justice oriented pedagogies; (2) determine how the threshold concepts of EDUC 121, Children’s Multicultural Literature aligned with elements of justice oriented pedagogies; (3) develop and implement curriculum and classroom activities to develop student capacities in the threshold concepts and focus areas of this project; (4) collect and analyze student work; and (5) use the findings to create a Justice, Equity, and Empowerment Framework for use with preservice teachers. Please review the poster representation of this project for additional details concerning the methodology and framework.

**Results**

An analysis of student work and journal entries from EDUC 121 indicated that students were able to shift their perceptions of multiculturalism and pluralism during the course. Additionally, students were able to apply their knowledge of different levels of multicultural education by completing a critical analysis of multicultural children’s and young adult literature. However, the findings from this project did not demonstrate that students in the EDUC 121 class were able to develop their capacity for civic action based on the teachings during this course. Given their capacity to think about multiculturalism and diversity in a critical manner, more explicit instruction on how to build on this type of thinking to engage in civic action would benefit students in the future.

**Implications for Future Research**

The findings that emerged from this work will be presented at the National Association for Multicultural Education’s (NAME) conference in New Orleans this October. As indicated by the results of this project, the Justice, Equity, and Empowerment Framework can be applied in a variety of courses, particularly those in the field of education and teacher development. Specific recommendations for applying the Justice, Equity, and Empowerment Framework to coursework for preservice and practicing educators include: (1) clearly define the articulation of social justice and equity themes among coursework / fieldwork at the various academic levels; (2) explicitly state the expected social justice and equity outcomes within course syllabus and assignments; (3) sequence coursework to build on students’ existing social justice and equity awareness and challenge them to expand and act upon such understandings; and (4) foster a connection (i.e., create activist networks) among the university and communities through teacher activists. Such recommendations represent the initial stages of what could become a larger movement to create classrooms and school communities that truly serve students and families.

**References**

