

Certificate in Foundations of Research, Evaluation and Policy *Guide for Youth*

Certificate Overview

There are many ways youth can be involved in research, evaluation and policy efforts. The Certificate in Foundations Research, Evaluation and Policy in Education is a way for young people to a) receive support and learning opportunities, and b) demonstrate their knowledge and skills in these areas. Although this process helps support youth in being an active voice in their local or state organizations around any issues, this guide and certificate specifically focus on education issues or topics across various educational spaces (school and community-based). Additionally, the certificate will provide a credential to communicate competencies in research, evaluation and policy to others.

Who is this certificate for? Any young person who either is:

1. Already working on a research, evaluation, and/or policy project who wants a way to demonstrate their knowledge and skills
2. Interested in getting involved in research, evaluation, and/or policy but needs some support

We designed this process to work best for people in the basic range of ages 12-25, but generally believe it is useful for anyone in the early stages of learning about research, evaluation and policy. The certificate is coordinated by the [Clinical Program at the Wisconsin Center for Education Research](#) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Please reach out to wcerclinics@wcer.wisc.edu for more information.

Equity and social justice are core to the following learning objectives and core competencies. Youth will have the opportunity to customize their experience through the participation of their organization and work in collaboration with adult allies, mentors, and community partners to identify which learning outcomes and competencies can be central to their experience.

Education in Wisconsin: Research, Evaluation, & Policy Project Guide

Purpose of this guide: Help people in Wisconsin research or evaluate issues related to education that are important to them, and provide communities, school leaders and policymakers with insight and recommendations for change.

How to use this guide: However, it is helpful! It is a workspace to describe your issue, build up your knowledge base, and make recommendations to a targeted audience for action. You can use this to then create a research and/or policy brief (e.g. infographic, video, social media posts, blog, etc.) to share what you found. This can be used individually or with a team.



Name(s):

Section I: What is Going Down in Our Education Spaces?

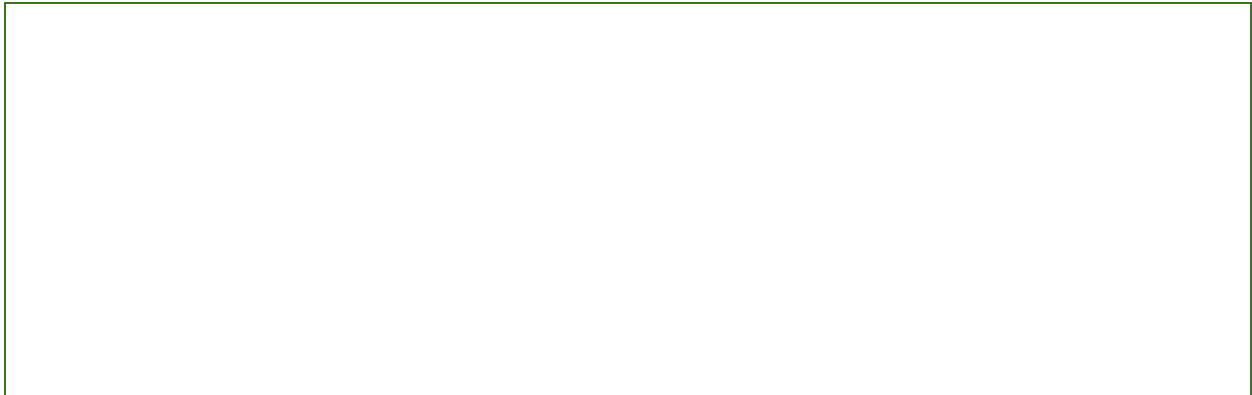
A. Identify an issue or topic in your school and/or community that you care about and that you feel impacts education broadly. Guiding prompts to include in your answer are as follows:

- How would you briefly describe this issue to someone who hasn't ever been in your school/community?
- If it is a problem, what are the root causes?
- What are the impacts of this problem? For whom and where? Are the impacts felt equally?
- Is your issue something that is going really well that more people should know about? Is it great for everyone? What is the "special sauce" for it being great?

B. Tell your story/Create Visual Representation of Issue

Why is this issue important to you? What are your own experiences with the issue (or friends' or family's)? How do your own identities and positionalities impact how you experience this issue? If you are working in a team, how does a diversity of identities in your team build your understanding of the issue? What do you need others to know?

- Create a visual representation of your issue together. This does not have to be a perfect depiction of the roots and causes of a particular issue or problem, but rather, think about how you could describe your issue visually. What factors within your community/school are you encountering that impact the issue? A concept map or problem tree are a couple of examples to consider but you are not beholden to these exact templates! [Check out these resources to help visualize the issue](#)



Section II: Building a Knowledge Base

A. Collect knowledge (Secondary Research)

Where should we look to find out more about this issue? Are there research reports on your issue, datasets collected, media reports, policy statements? Have other young people, families, educators, communities shared their own experiences about your issue? [Check out these resources to help create a list.](#)

The goal of building a knowledge base is not for you to only search through academic research articles, but also explore what other knowledge spaces are speaking on your topic/issue. Below we have set a goal for you to get started. We ask that you locate and read 1 text from each area below:

- 1 Academic article on your topic
- 1 Resource from an organization/advocacy group that researches your topic
- 1 Alternative media source (ie podcast, documentary, etc.) that speaks to your topic

If you have issues finding text or are running into “request to pay” for a text, please let your adult ally know as they can often provide support.

Feel free to use this [knowledge base spreadsheet](#) for your notes on these texts.

Spreadsheet includes the following prompts to consider as you take notes:

Text title

Text publish date (this is important to note as you understand the context of the time in which something is published on how they speak on your topic)

What is the main argument of the text? (aka what are they trying to get you as a reader to understand about your topic/issue?)

What do you still have questions about from this text? (this helps as you get to building out what questions you could ask or what direction your project will take)

Any powerful quotes you wish to think about alongside your project?

B. Find the Holes/Collect Youth Voices (Primary Research)

Now that you have read up on your topic/issue, it's time to address the following questions:

- What do we not know, but should find out?
- Who do we need to talk to?
- What other research should be done?
- What other data would be helpful to have?
- Whose stories need to be told, heard and amplified?
- If this was an issue students' have made recommendations for in the past, have they been implemented?

Take some time to reflect on the above questions below:

Now, we can work to build your own project plan!

- First, based on your above reflection, how would you like to collect student voices on your topic/issue? Examples of how to collect perspectives can be found here, or if you had ideas from your previous reading, feel free to move forward that way!

- Now, let's make a plan for who you will be collecting voices from and the plan of action for this:

Who do you plan on collecting perspectives from? You can be as specific or broad as you would like. For example, did you notice a particular group of students who are not heard in the previous text you read? Are you hoping just to get a broad understanding across students as this topic/issue hasn't been explored much?

While the "How" of your plan is the tool you identified to collect perspectives above, do you have an idea of how you would recruit to get people to participate?

Where would you be using the tool? Will this be done on their own time or will participants need to be with you? If they need to be present, have you thought about what location? (ie a coffee shop, virtual space, etc.)

When do you plan on beginning to recruit and use the tool to collect perspectives? Map out a plan for the next 2 months that highlights each aspect of your plan:

What do you plan on asking your participants? Be sure to revisit the tool you have chosen and what questions you could ask based on that tool. We recommend preparing at least 3-5 questions to asks:

C. Summarize what you learned

What are the most important takeaways from the resources you reviewed and the knowledge base you collected? Is there any agreement/consensus? Where are areas of disagreement?

E. Critical Consciousness Reflection

What community issues or national issues came up for you as you talked to people? How did, if at all, people speak about systemic issues?

Section III: Recommending Policy and Action Steps

A. Now it's time to put your research or evaluation in connection with how you are understanding policies. Below you will work to address the following:

- What local, state, and/or national policies are relevant to your issue?
- Do other districts or states have different policies related to your issue that we can learn from?
- Who is impacted most from the above policies? How does it connect to the people you collected data from?
- Are there organizations, activists, etc. that are advocating for similar issues as your research or evaluation represents? If so, identify at least two.

[Check out these resources to help.](#)

Relevant policies:

Can we learn from other policies? If so which ones?

Who is impacted most from the above policies? How does it connect to the people you collected data from?

Are there organizations, activists, etc. that are advocating for similar issues as your research or evaluation represents? If so, identify at least two.

B. Now it's time to brainstorm some action steps. Use the following prompts to help:

- What are concrete, actionable things that young people, families, and/or communities could do about this issue?
- What are concrete, actionable things that school staff, school leaders, and/or policymakers could do?
- What can be done individually?
- What needs to be done collectively and in coalitions? Are there organizations already doing things that can help you?

From the above prompts, begin to jot down some actionable steps you can take based on your understanding of your research and select policies you have reviewed. Please note that sometimes a reasonable action step seems small but can move to larger impact. For example, a

conversation with a key decision-maker – who could that be based on your topic/issue? What could their reception of your information lead to in terms of policy change?

C. Now let's put your plan to action! Use the blank space below to map out how you will share your findings and recommendations. Use the following prompts to help:

- Identify 3-4 specific recommendations for school and/or leaders related to your issue
- Identify allies (people and/or organizations) that can help
- Review [the resource list](#)
- Figure out how you will communicate the recommendations
- Prepare a presentation/script/handout of your issue (you can use the visual created in Section 1), your findings (from Section 2) and your recommendations. Presentation is short and can take any format (i.e., song, scene or play, Power Point, spoken word, panel, etc.)

Section IV: Final Reflective Essay & Visual Map

Congratulations on all of your work on research, evaluation, and policy advocacy! Now we would like for you to take time to reflect on your experience and what you have learned and accomplished. Create a visual to show your understanding of the relationship between research, evaluation, and policy - how do you think about this understanding as it relates to your experience? How can this visual help you to think about this issue moving forward? Where do you see yourself going forward?