

Christopher Wenz

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Candidate for Core Faculty, Doctor of Education in Educational and Professional Practice

Dear Dr. Eskridge,

I write to you incredibly excited by the opportunity to join a program committed to social, economic and environmental justice. Further, as an alumnus of Hampshire College, I experienced first-hand the power of an institution dedicated to learner-centered education; it would be an honor to join the Antioch faculty, and provide a similar experience to doctoral students in the EdD program.

Since leaving my position of Research Scientist at Landmark College in June, I have been providing full-time care for my 5 year-old son and volunteering my time overseeing a massive renovation of his non-profit preschool: Willow Blossom Learning Center. In my role as Board President, I have worked closely with the Center Director to secure funding for this much needed renovation. I have also volunteered hundreds of hours to complete the carpentry and painting necessary to create a safer and more functional space for the Program. I share this with you because my efforts at Willow Blossom are indicative of the diligence and dedication I bring to all of my work; in addition, it would be incredibly rewarding to apply the knowledge and connections I've gathered to the support of Antioch students interested in non-profit leadership or early-childhood education.

In May, I will defend my doctoral dissertation which blends my two primary research interests: autism and literacy instruction. In my dissertation, I use latent profile modeling to identify reading profiles among autistic adolescents. I intend to extend this work to further explore how neurodivergences (such as autism) challenge our "typical" understanding of reading dis/ability and identify evidence-based practices for supporting the literacy development of neurodivergent students. In addition to my pursuit of research that deepens our understanding of neurodiversity, I am currently working with my doctoral advisor Dr. Rachael Gabriel on research related to Reading Recovery (RR). In partnership with the Reading Recovery Council of North America, we are currently revising a grant proposal we submitted to the NIH last year. Our aim in this study is to use the annual data collected by Reading Recovery to identify variance (and the potential causes of that variance) in how 1st graders respond to the intervention provided by RR teachers. We hope to use the knowledge and hypotheses generated in this initial study to guide further work with RR teachers and identify programmatic changes that will improve the efficiency and efficacy of the intervention for all students.

Finally, I am early in my career as a scholar. However, I believe I can provide valuable support and guidance to doctoral students in the EdD program. In my five years as a tutor at the University Writing Center at UCONN, I worked closely with many doctoral candidates (from a wide variety of academic disciplines) that were seeking extended support for the writing and design of their doctoral dissertations. These working relationships often spanned several semesters and taught me a great deal about how to support students as they design, conduct and write about their original research. This work was among the most meaningful and exciting work I have done as an educator, and I am thrilled by the opportunity to empower and support doctoral candidates at Antioch.

I would be grateful to be considered for this position and for the opportunity to discuss my experience and

qualifications with you in an interview. I look forward to hearing from you and hearing more about the unique program you have created.

Sincerely,

Christopher Wenz