June 14, 2019
Dear Review Committee Members

I am pleased to offer this letter of nomination for Dr. Meghan Manfra’s published research article “Action Research and Systematic, Intentional Change in Teaching Practice” recently published in Review of Research in Education (March 2019, Vol. 43, pp. 163–196). The Review of Research in Education is a publication of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). This journal is considered to be one of the top journals in the field of education with an impact factor of 1.594. (See: https://journals.sagepub.com/home/rre).

In her article, Dr. Manfra contrasts action research findings from the social studies to the fields of English language arts, mathematics, and science. Her analysis demonstrates the potential for teachers to change their teaching practice by engaging in action research. As a result, teachers improve pedagogical content knowledge, integrate disciplined inquiry into teaching, and address critical issues in the classroom. By comparing across the fields, she identifies areas of relevant strength within the social studies while also drawing attention to areas for improvement.

This work coincides with a recent white paper that Dr. Manfra co-authored, “Moving our field forward: Practitioner research in the social studies.” This paper was intended to reach a larger practitioner audience and to provide support and guidance to social studies educators interested in conducting their own action research. She was also recently awarded a grant from the Spencer Foundation for her project, “Changing Teaching Practice: Integrating the C3 Framework through Action Research.”

I have known Dr. Manfra for over 15 years, and have had many opportunities to work with her on collaborative projects. For the last 10 years, I have had the pleasure of working with Dr. Manfra in the Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences. Since coming to NC State, Dr. Manfra and I have worked together closely in the social studies education program in the College of Education, so I feel well qualified to write about the high quality of Dr. Manfra’s work and the Review of Research in Education research article being nominated here.

Dr. Manfra is an outstanding scholar. The overall body of her work is far-reaching and impactful. She has broken new ground integrating action research into the field of social studies. Dr. Manfra’s early work in this area included two pivotal journal articles, “Action research: Exploring the theoretical divide between practical and critical approaches,” which appeared in the Journal of Curriculum & Instruction and “Critical inquiry in the social studies classroom: Portraits of critical teacher research,” which was published in Theory and Research in Social Education. She then built on these articles with an influential chapter on practitioner research in the social studies published in the 2017 Wiley Handbook of Social Studies Research.

Her most recent work in this area is equally impressive. Dr. Manfra is the author of a new book from Sage Publishing on action research methods titled, Action research for classrooms, schools, and communities. This book examines approaches to practitioner research, including action research and self-study, that can provide structure for engaging practitioners as co-researchers to bring about change, breaking down traditional barriers in access to research, while also empowering practitioners as researchers and theorizers.
Taken together, the full body of Dr. Manfra’s research activity informs the article under nomination in *Review of Research in Education*. This article pushes against barriers that are limiting our use of action research in social studies education related to the logistical issues of conducting action research, the dissemination of findings, and a general misunderstanding of how action research works. With this research article, Dr. Manfra is opening a much needed conversation about education reform in social studies. The recent publication of the C3 Framework and renewed emphasis on inquiry-based teaching and learning, calls for grounded, classroom-based research to inform the inquiry practices that are emerging. This article from Dr. Manfra leads the way in putting forth a rigorous, practitioner-based action research methodology that can support systematic and intentional changes in teaching toward the aims of NCSS and the C3 Framework.

Dr. Manfra’s leadership in social studies education is impressive. She is an accomplished innovator and trailblazer in expanding our understanding of research in social studies and our capacities to draw in a more inclusive body of researchers focused on more transformational research questions. I am honored to have Dr. Manfra as a colleague and enthusiastically bring forward this nomination for her published research article “Action Research and Systematic, Intentional Change in Teaching Practice” in *Review of Research in Education*.

Sincerely,

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