

George Mason University
College of Education & Human Development-Graduate School of Education
Advanced Studies in Teaching & Learning- Master of Education Program

EDRD 635-001
School-Based Inquiry in Literacy
Spring 2005

Nicola Williams, Ph.D.
kwilliab@gmu.edu
Office: Robinson Hall A, 308C
Phone: 703.993.3851
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Session Dates:

Thursdays, Jan. 27, Feb. 3, 10, 17, 24; Mar. 3, 10, 24, 31; Apr. 7, 21, 28; May 5, 12, 19

Times: 4:30pm - 7:10pm

Locations: April 28th: FCPS Teacher Research Conference Waterford-at-Fair Oaks in Fairfax;

All other session dates: Robinson Hall A room 245

Course Overview

Course Description

This course is the capstone of the literacy emphasis. The focus will be on research-based inquiry related to literacy in school settings. Major assignments include a leadership synopsis of a teacher inquiry group, a review of literature and a teacher action research project.

Prerequisites: EDRD 630, 631, 632, 633, 634 or permission of the program coordinator.

Course Outcomes

1. Students will analyze major reading studies and refer to the sources in academic writing.
2. Students will recount historical developments in the history of reading.
3. Students will refer to recent summaries of research to ensure that they are using effective practices.
4. Students will design, lead and summarize a teacher inquiry group in their school setting.
5. Students will identify specific questions related to knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions related to his/her teaching of reading and writing; plan specific strategies for finding answers to those questions; and, carry out those plans and articulate the answers derived.

General Requirements

1. The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Because the class will be structured around discussion and small group activities pertaining to school inquiry in literacy, it is important to keep up with the readings and to participate in class.
2. Class attendance is essential. If, due to an emergency, you will not be in class, please contact the instructor prior to class time. You are expected to email assignments to the instructor regardless of your class attendance on the day that the assignment is due. Students are responsible for obtaining information given during class discussions despite attendance.
3. It is expected that assignments will be turned in on time. All assignments are to be submitted electronically as an email attachment to the instructor by 4:30 pm on the date that the assignment is due. An approved extension obtained prior to the due date is the only way that an assignment will be accepted after the due date.
4. Respect for the work that we are doing in this course is crucial to your professional development in this course. Specifically, this means maintaining a critical yet, collegial outlook as evidenced in your participation during class discussions, and in all other forms of course communication.

GSE Syllabus Statements of Expectations

The Graduate School of Education (GSE) expects that all students abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://www.gse.gmu.edu> for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full honor code.
- Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See www.gmu.edu/student/drc or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

Required Texts:

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Edition</i>
Johnson, A. P.	A Short Guide to Action Research	Allyn & Bacon	2nd (2004)
Myers, E. & Rust, F.	Taking Action with Teacher Research	Heinemann	2003
Sharon Walpole, Michael C. McKenna	The Literacy Coach's Handbook : A Guide to Research-Based Practice (Solving Problems In Teaching Of Literacy)	Guilford Press	2004 paperback

Recommended Texts:

<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Publisher</i>	<i>Edition</i>
Freire, P.	Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare to Teach	Westview	1998
Hubbard, R. & Power, B.	The Art of Classroom Inquiry: A Handbook for Teacher-Researchers	Heinemann	1993
Power, B.	Taking Note: Improving Your Observational Note-Taking	Stenhouse	1996

Excerpt from:

Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (Eds.). (1993). *Inside/Outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. (Language and Literacy Series). NY: Teachers College Press. ISBN: 0807732354 (Available as an electronic resource through GMU library webpage.)

Course Requirements

Assignments	Due Dates	Points
<i>Analysis of research article and related group discussion</i>	Date selected in Session 1 See Course Overview for details.	20
<i>Leadership Synopsis of a study group of teachers and paraprofessionals</i>	(2-3) Group meetings should take place by Session 3 Leadership Synopsis Due: Session 4	30
<i>Teacher Journal/Research Memos</i>	Please keep up to date and bring to each class session to share with others. Individual assignments due as scheduled in the syllabus.	30
<i>Teacher Action Research Project Proposal Plan</i> Draft due as a Research Memo in Session 6	Final Proposal Plan and Draft Review of Lit due Session 8	60
<i>Teacher Action Research Class Presentation and Project</i>	Class Presentation Date Selected:	60
	Project Due: May 19th	
TOTAL		200

Grading Scale: A= 93-100; A-= 90-92; B+ = 88-89; B = 80-87; C = 75-79

Brief Descriptions of Course Assignments

When each assignment is assigned in class, you will receive an Assignment Sheet that will detail the description, purpose, and specific requirements of the assignment, including a description of the rubric. What follows are thumbnail descriptions of the major assignments for the course:

Analysis of research article and related group discussion

Each student is required to select a research article, analyze the article, and lead a group discussion of the material. Topics should be linked to each student's literacy research focus and potential teacher action research project. Discussions must summarize and analyze explanations of relevant research terms and methodologies, research significance and practical implications.

Leadership Synopsis of a study group of teachers and paraprofessionals

This series of 2-3 meetings is intended to impact your school environment regarding a specific literacy topic. Ideally, the topic should both be one that generates interest in your school community, and also relevant to your intended research project proposal area. You are to hand in a **Leadership Synopsis** of these meetings including agendas, handouts, meeting notes, and a final analysis of your goals, leadership methods and what was achieved in your study group.

Teacher Journal /Research Memos

Research memos that focus on essential research concepts covered in class discussions and in the required readings, including those related to teacher action research design, data collection and data analysis.

Teacher Action Research Project Final Proposal

Using the model given, develop a research question, design the project including a timeline data collection chart and conduct a review of literature, which includes a variety of at least 8 recent recommended journals and books on the topic. In total, students will submit a revised research proposal and a draft of a review of literature. One-level APA format with bibliography is required.

Teacher Action Research Project and Class Presentation

Collect and analyze *preliminary* data and prepare an *up to the minute* report on the project. A class presentation describing the state of this project should also be made. Criteria for evaluation of the proposal and project include clarity, quality of the revised literature review, quality of the research design, preliminary analysis and advocacy implications, and appropriate use of APA guidelines and academic written English. Final reports will be evaluated for clarity, thoughtfulness of the study and of the required presentation.

Course Overview

January 27, 2005 - Introductory Session: Course and Syllabus Overview

- Registration/Student Info Sheet
- Review of Course Syllabus
- Discuss Assignments due (see below)
- **Discuss Leadership Synopsis Assignment**
- **Generated Topics of Interest from your work in this program in and in your practice**
- Close: Assignments for next week

1. *What aspect of reading instruction is provocative to you?* Read Ch 1 of *Composing a Teacher Study group* (handed out in EDRD634) - Decide on a topic that interests you enough to design a teacher/paraprofessional study group around at your school.

2. **Research Memo#1:** Explore the GMU teacher research site: <http://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/> and respond to the question: What is teacher action research, and how might it be useful to me as a reading specialist? (typed, 1-2 pages, bring 2 copies to **Session 1**).

Sessions	Session Topics	Readings/Assignments Due
Session 2: 2/3/05	<p>What is Teacher Action Research?</p> <p>Teacher Research Study Groups</p> <p>Revised Copy of Syllabus handed out in class</p> <p>Research Critique and Discussion Assigned</p> <p>Problematizing your Research Study: Guided Questions</p>	<p>Research Memo#2: Detail a 1-2 paragraph strategy for how you will structure, motivate and invite members to join your study group. Speculate as to how this activity might impact your school and how it might help you to understand the literacy context of your school.</p> <p>Required readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Johnson, Preface, Chapters 1, 3 & 6 2. Walpole & McKenna, Preface and Chapters 1 & 9 3. Handbook of Reading Research: Study of Teacher Research handed out in Session 1 <p>Recommended additional readings: Samples descriptions of teacher research handed out in class</p>
Session 3: 2/10/05	<p>Advocacy</p> <p>Refining the Problem to Study and Developing the Research Question</p> <p>Research Critique and Discussion: > <i>Kelly, Melanie and Brandy</i></p>	<p>Research Memo #3: <u>Problematize</u> your research project topic using Guided Questions handed out in class.</p> <p>Required readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meyers & Rust, Foreword, Intro & Chapters 1- 3 2. Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (1999). The teacher research movement: A decade later. <i>Educational Researcher</i>, 28(7), pp. 15-25. 3. From your list of generated topics from Session 1, find and review two <u>research</u> articles that increase your understanding of one or more of those topics. Only one can be from a previous course reading. Bring these articles to class, highlight their research questions and what they are advocating regarding literacy practices. <p>Recommended additional readings: Sample of Problematizing Research Topic Research Memo</p>
Session 4: 2/17/05	<p>Re-considering Leadership</p> <p>Proposing the Research Project: Understanding the Nature of Teacher Research: Design, Terms, Methodological Frameworks</p>	<p>> Leadership Report Synopsis Due</p> <p>Required readings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Johnson, Chapters 4, 5 & 10 2. Walpole & McKenna, Chapter 10 3. Meyers & Rust Chapter 8 <p>Recommended additional readings: TBA</p>

Course Overview (cont.)

<p>Session 5: 2/24/05</p>	<p>Synthesizing Reading Research</p> <p>Interpreting and Discussing Literacy Research: Reviewing relevant literature</p> <p>Research Critique and Discussion: >Jan, Kathy and Jolene</p>	<p>>Research Memo#4: List in APA style at least four significant studies related to your research interest. Using support from your readings this week, note why and how they might be significant to your study.</p> <p>Required readings: 1. Johnson, Chapters 7 & 16 2. Handbook of Reading Research: (vol. 3) Ch 5: Trends in reading research in the United States: Changing intellectual currents over three decades 3. Walpole & McKenna, Chapter 3</p> <p>Recommended additional readings: TBA</p>
<p>Session 6: 3/3/05</p>	<p>Creating Supportive Literacy Contexts in the Classroom and School</p> <p>Data Collection</p> <p>Research Triads</p> <p><i>Guest Teacher Researcher</i></p>	<p>>Research Memo#5: Draft a Research Project Proposal using model format including a timeline. Start your Data Collection chart.</p> <p>Required readings: 1. Johnson, Chapters 8 2. Meyers & Rust, Chapters 4 3. Walpole & McKenna, Chapter 2 & 8</p> <p>Recommended additional readings: TBA</p>
<p>Session 7: 3/10/05</p>	<p>Interpretation</p> <p>Data Analysis</p> <p>Data Grids</p> <p>Research Critique and Discussion: > Brenda, Barb and Monica</p>	<p>>Research Memo#6: Thinking through a Data Analysis Grid</p> <p>Required readings: 1. Johnson, Chapter 9 2. 3. To be determined (TBD): Example from Janet Allen's Teacher Research (TR) work</p> <p>Recommended additional readings: TBA</p>
<p>3/17/05</p>	<p>NO CLASS</p>	<p>GMU SPRING BREAK</p>
<p>Session 8: 3/24/05</p>	<p>Honing Action Research Skills</p> <p>Recommended Book Focus: Observational Note-taking</p> <p><i>Guest Teacher Researcher</i></p>	<p>>Teacher Action Research Final Proposal Plan and Draft of Review of Literature Due</p> <p>Required readings: 1. Johnson, Chapter 12 2. Meyers & Rust, Chapter 5 3. TBD: Selection from examples of other TR's work</p> <p>Recommended reading: Power's Taking Note: Improving Your Observational Note-Taking</p> <p>Recommended additional readings: TBA</p>
<p>Session 9: 3/31/05</p>	<p>Moving toward a Discussion section:</p> <p>Your Plan Of Action</p> <p>Final Presentation Options</p> <p><i>Guest Teacher Researcher</i></p>	<p>> Research Memo#7 :Notes on Drafting an Action Plan based on your preliminary findings</p> <p>Required readings: 1. Johnson, Chapter 11 &13 2. TBD: Selection from examples of other TR's work</p> <p>Recommended additional readings: TBA</p>

Course Overview (cont.)

Session 10: 4/7/05	Reporting Results Preparing the Research Report <i>Guest Teacher Researcher</i>	>Research Memo#8: Deciding on a Final Presentation Option Required readings: 1. Johnson, Chapter 14, 17 & 18 2. TBD: Selection from examples of other TR's work Recommended additional readings: TBA
Week of 4/14/05 No Class Session: American Educational Research Meeting in Montreal, Canada	Research Triads should communicate regarding data collection and analysis progress	INDEPENDENT FIELD WORK
Session 11: 4/21/05	Individual Meetings with Instructor	INDEPENDENT FIELD WORK
Session 12: 4/28/05	FCPS Teacher Research Conference LOCATION: 4:30 - 8:00 p.m. at the Waterford-at-Fair Oaks in Fairfax, http://www.fcps.k12.va.us/DIS/OSDT/StaffDevelopment/trn.htm#Teacher%20Researcher	
Session 13: 5/5/05	Presentation of Teacher Research Projects: Kathy, Melanie, Jolene, Brandy and Barb	Selection of readings that support your research report
Session 14: 5/12/05	Presentation of Teacher Research Projects: Kelly, Jan, Brenda and Monica	Selection of readings that support your research report
Session 15: 5/19/05	FINAL CLASS MEETING: Capstone Celebration	>Teacher Research Projects Due

Notable Texts for an Action Researcher's Library:

- Bell, J. (1993). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education and social science*. Buckingham, England :Open University Press. ISBN: 0335190944
- Burnaford, G., Fischer, F. & Hobson, D. (1996). *Teachers doing research: Practical possibilities*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hopkins, D. (1993). *A teacher's guide to classroom research*. Buckingham, England: Open University Press.
- Hubbard, R. & Power, B. (1999). *Living the questions: A guide for teacher researchers*. NY: Stenhouse Publishers. ISBN: 1571100814
- Freeman, D. (1998). *Doing teacher research: From inquiry to understanding*. Toronto, Canada: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Macintyre, C. (2000). *The art of action research in the classroom*. London: David Fulton Publishers. ISBN: 1853467014
- MacLean, M. & Mohr, M. (1999). *Teacher-researchers at work*. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project.
- Mills, G. (2000). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill. ISBN: 0130422541
- Sagor, R. (1993). *How to conduct collaborative action research*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. ISBN: 0871202018