

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Education

EDRS 590: Methods of Educational Research

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COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this course is to provide a learning experience that will enable the student to:

Acquire a knowledge and understanding of the basic types of educational research and how each type is used in educational decision-making.

Develop the skills necessary to use educational research in his/her role as a teacher, administrator, or other education professional.

Practice the knowledge and skills learned by interpreting and designing educational research studies.

Required Textbook and Materials:

Bonfadini, J.E. (1997). Educational research tutorial CDROM

Gay, L.R. and Airasian, P. (2003). Educational Research. Competencies For Analysis and Application (7th ed.). New Jersey: Merrill Publishing Co.

Suggested reference:

American Psychological Association. (2001). Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed). Washington, D.C.: Author.

Requirements of the Course

1. Research Plan (40 % of the grade)

The student will develop an action research plan on a topic of interest to the student. Each student will work individually or in a group of students with similar backgrounds and interests to develop a series of research questions of interest and will plan a research study to investigate one of those questions. This plan will be developed during the semester in class and will be written up as a series of short (1-2 pages) and focused reports that will provide the necessary structure for the development

of professional-level inquiry skills as each pertinent topic is developed in class. The instructor will provide a pre-structured fill-in-the-blanks format for each brief report.

These reports will cover the following topics:

Report #1: Asking worthwhile questions about your professional practice.

Report #2: Finding out what's already known about your topic of interest.

Report #3: Planning the appropriate methods and procedures for investigating your topic of interest in your own professional practice.

As the course progresses, students will turn in reports and get constructive feedback from the instructor. At the ninth class meeting, each student will present a brief verbal summary of his/her reports 1-3. Using the constructive feedback from fellow students, the student will revise and refine the research plan. The final plan will be submitted at the 13th class meeting.

The initial versions of each report will count as 5% of the final grade (total 15%) and the final version of the action research plan will count as 25% of the final grade (total =40%) for this series of assignments.

2. Critique of existing piece of research (25% of grade)

The student will select an existing piece of research, analyze the research using the skills developed in the course, and critique the research as to its potential use in educational decision-making.

3. Competency Exams (10% of grade)

The CD Rom required for this course includes three competency tests. The tests are self-administered independently. Each test may be taken twice to reach a competency level of 90%. A printout of all tests should be turned into the instructor on the dates assigned in the syllabus.

4. Brief mid-term exam (10% of grade)

Students will respond briefly to furnished questions applying the content of the first half of the course to a new description of an educational action research scenario.

5. Class participation (10% of grade)

Students are expected to attend class and participate in small and large group discussions.

6. In class presentation of action research report (5% of grade)

Students will prepare a powerpoint or other visual presentation of their action research report and will present that report to the class along with an abstract of their report for each class member.

Grading

Successful completion of 1-6 above at a graduate-school level will guarantee the student a grade of at least a "B". Superior work will merit an "A". Less than successful completion of the requirements will result in a "C" or less. Less than successful completion of the requirements with any missing element will result in an "F".

