

**George Mason University  
Graduate School of Education  
EDCI 626 :  
Action Research for Gifted Education  
Fall 2010  
Thursdays, 4:30 online only**

**Instructor:** Sheree L. Harnagel, M.Ed  
**Phone:** 281-482-1326 (home) or 571-259-2156 (cell)  
**Email:** sharnage@gmu.edu

**Class Dates:** August 26, 2010 through December 16, 2010

**Class Time:** 4:30- 7:10 p.m. initial meeting start time online.

**All students will be expected to be online in Blackboard on the first meeting night, August 26<sup>th</sup>. Instructor will run a real time discussion area. Subsequent weeks will run Mondays through Sunday evenings. All assignments due during the week should be posted on due date. All weekly discussion participation should occur by initial posting due date and Sunday evenings.**

**Course Description:** Qualitative research attempts to describe and interpret some human phenomenon and varies according to the research paradigm, methods, and assumptions. During this course, students will identify and investigate a school-based problem related to gifted education by conducting an action research study in their local school. The major goal for this course is to provide an opportunity for students to apply inquiry, writing and research skills to a relevant issue or concern in gifted education. The final product for the course will be the development of a grant proposal, an article for publication in a professional journal, or a formal report to a local administrative body based on preliminary findings from individual projects.

**Standards:** The capstone course in the area of emphasis in gifted/talented learners also addresses the NAGC-CEC Joint National Standards (2006) that include:

**Standard 3: Individual Learning Differences**

Educators of the gifted understand the effects that gifts and talents can have on an individual's learning in school and throughout life. Moreover, educators of the gifted are active and resourceful in seeking to understand how language, culture, and family background interact with an individual's predispositions to impact academic and social behavior, attitudes, values, and interests. The understanding of these learning differences and their interactions provides the foundation upon which educators of the gifted plan instruction to provide meaningful and challenging learning.

K1	Influences of diversity factors on individuals with gifts and talents.
K2	Academic and affective characteristics and learning needs of individuals with gifts, talents, and disabilities.
K3	Idiosyncratic learning patterns of individuals with gifts and talents, including those from diverse backgrounds.

K4	Influences of different beliefs, traditions, and values across and within diverse groups on relationships among individuals with gifts and talents, their families, schools, and communities.
S1	Integrate perspectives of diverse groups into planning instruction for individuals with gifts and talents.

#### **Standard 4: Instructional Strategies**

Educators of the gifted possess a repertoire of evidence-based curriculum and instructional strategies to differentiate for individuals with gifts and talents. They select, adapt, and use these strategies to promote challenging learning opportunities in general and special curricula and to modify learning environments to enhance self-awareness and self-efficacy for individuals with gifts and talents. They enhance the learning of critical and creative thinking, problem solving, and performance skills in specific domains. Moreover, educators of the gifted emphasize the development, practice, and transfer of advanced knowledge and skills across environments throughout the lifespan leading to creative, productive careers in society for individuals with gifts and talents.

K1	School and community resources, including content specialists, that support differentiation.
K2	Curricular, instructional, and management strategies effective for individuals with exceptional learning needs.
S1	Apply pedagogical content knowledge to instructing learners with gifts and talents.
S2	Apply higher-level thinking and metacognitive models to content areas to meet the needs of individuals with gifts and talents.
S3	Provide opportunities for individuals with gifts and talents to explore, develop, or research their areas of interest or talent.
S4	Preassess the learning needs of individuals with gifts and talents in various domains and adjust instruction based on continual assessment.
S5	Pace delivery of curriculum and instruction consistent with needs of individuals with gifts and talents.
S6	Engage individuals with gifts and talents from all backgrounds in challenging, multicultural curricula.
S7	Use information and/or assistive technologies to meet the needs of individuals with exceptional learning needs.

#### **Standard 5: Learning Environments and Social Interactions**

Educators of the gifted actively create learning environments for individuals with gifts and talents that foster cultural understanding, safety and emotional well being, positive social interactions, and active engagement. In addition, educators of the gifted foster environments in which diversity is valued and individuals are taught to live harmoniously and productively in a culturally diverse world. Educators of the gifted shape environments to encourage independence, motivation, and self-advocacy of individuals with gifts and talents.

K1	Ways in which groups are stereotyped and experience historical and current discrimination and implications for gifted and talented education.
K2	Influence of social and emotional development on interpersonal relationships and learning of individuals with gifts and talents.
S1	Design learning opportunities for individuals with gifts and talents that promote self-awareness, positive peer relationships, intercultural experiences, and leadership.
S2	Create learning environments for individuals with gifted and talents that promote self-awareness, self-efficacy, leadership, and lifelong learning.
S3	Create safe learning environments for individuals with gifts and talents that encourage active participation in individual and group activities to enhance independence, interdependence, and positive peer relationships.
S4	Create learning environments and intercultural experiences that allow individuals with gifts and talents to appreciate their own and others' language and cultural heritage.

S5	Develop social interaction and coping skills in individuals with gifts and talents to address personal and social issues, including discrimination and stereotyping.
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**Standard 9: Professional and Ethical Practice**

Educators of the gifted are guided by the profession’s ethical and professional practice standards. They practice in multiple roles and complex situations across wide age and developmental ranges. Their practice requires ongoing attention to professional and ethical considerations. They engage in professional activities that promote growth in individuals with gifts and talents and update themselves on evidence-based best practices. Educators of the gifted view themselves as lifelong learners and regularly reflect on and adjust their practice. They are aware of how attitudes, behaviors, and ways of communicating can influence their practice. Educators of the gifted understand that culture and language interact with gifts and talents and are sensitive to the many aspects of the diversity of individuals with gifts and talents and their families.

K1	Personal and cultural frames of reference that affect one’s teaching of individuals with gifts and talents, including biases about individuals from diverse backgrounds.
K2	Organizations and publications relevant to the field of gifted and talented education.
S1	Assess personal skills and limitations in teaching individuals with exceptional learning needs.
S2	Maintain confidential communication about individuals with gifts and talents.
S3	Encourage and model respect for the full range of diversity among individuals with gifts and talents.
S4	Conduct activities in gifted and talented education in compliance with laws, policies, and standards of ethical practice.
S5	Improve practice through continuous research-supported professional development in gifted education and related fields.
S6	Participate in the activities of professional organizations related to gifted and talented education.
S7	Reflect on personal practice to improve teaching and guide professional growth in gifted and talented education.

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2. Understanding the characteristics of gifted students including: (p 39).
  - a. Varied expressions of advanced aptitudes, skills, creativity, and conceptual understandings
  - b. Methodologies that respond to the affective (social emotional) needs of gifted students; and
  - c. Gifted behaviors in special populations students (i.e. those who are culturally diverse, low income, or physically disabled).
6. Understanding of contemporary issues and research in gifted education , including:
  - a. The systematic gathering, analyzing, and reporting of formative and summative data: and
  - b. Current local, state, and national issues and concerns
7. Understanding of and proficiency in grammar, usage, and mechanics and their integration in writing.

## **Course Goals:**

Participants in this course will demonstrate their competency in the following areas:

1. Formulating an appropriate research question: Defining the Action Research Project
2. Designing a manageable and appropriate methodology: Differentiate between qualitative and Quantitative data collection, techniques, and KNOW when to select each.
3. Gathering data utilizing one or more formal qualitative methods.
4. Analyzing the results utilizing a qualitative methodology: Distinguish between Data Analysis and Data Interpretation.
5. Sharing findings in a constructive format appropriate to the study
6. Identifying criteria for evaluating the quality of action research and practical inquiry through response to articles, peer review of student work, and guided self-assessment.

All participants will be expected to:

- a) demonstrate their knowledge of theoretical foundations of qualitative research methodologies introduced in action research through informed participation in class discussions, presentations, and products.
- b) demonstrate their competency as an action researcher through the formation, implementation, and evaluation of their projects.
- c) demonstrate their understanding of research issues in the field as they related to their own line of inquiry through a response journal

Grading Scale: 94-100 = A, 90-93 = A-, 86-89 = B+, 80-85 = B-, 70-79 = C, Below 70 = F

## **Mode of Course Delivery:**

Course delivery will be through weekly independent readings, weekly online discussions, small group discussion based on professional interests and projects and research based questions that can be examined through student individual action research projects, whole class discussions or student presentations. Course discussions will take place via Bb discussion boards and email. Instructor will also be available via phone as well as Db "questions for instructor" discussion strand in online classroom.

## **Required Texts:**

**Mills, G. (2011). Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/ Prentice-Hall. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.**

**Student also is expected to sign up for the Pearson My EducationLab. You should receive an Access Code along with the purchase of the textbook**

## **Optional:**

Graue, M.E. and Walsh, D. (1998). Studying Children in Context: Theories, Methods, and Ethics. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

## **Recommended Articles:**

Hole, S. & McEntee, G. (1999). Reflection is at the heart of practice. *Educational Leadership* 56(8), 34-37.

Tomlinson, C.A. (1995). Action Research and Practical Inquiry: An Overview and an Invitation to Teachers of Gifted Learners. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 18 (4), 467-84.

## **Selected Readings From:**

Arhar, J., Holly, M., & Kasten, W. (2001). *Action research for teachers: Traveling the yellow brick road*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

## **Course Requirements:**

**Action Research Project:** three components comprise the final grade for the Action Research Project.

1. *Components of Action Research Proposal (30%):* each section is available for discussion on the specified date and a copy of the drafted section is turned into the instructor for review on the dates below. An Assignment Dropbox that will be setup in the Bb classroom for the student to post the drafts. There will also be a corresponding Db strand that week so you can post your drafts for colleague review and critique.

The sections to include: Introduction, Literature Review (Reconnaissance), Methodology, Analysis (with accompanying samples/examples), Findings, Implications for Practice and Reflections:

A = 20% of drafts completed in a timely fashion ready for thoughtful discussion and critique

A- = 15% of drafts completed in a timely fashion ready for thoughtful discussion and critique.

B = 10% (drafts completed in a timely fashion ready for thoughtful discussion and critique.

C = 5% drafts completed in a timely fashion ready for thoughtful discussion and critique.

**Projected due dates are:**

**September 30<sup>th</sup>: Inquiry Question, Timeline and Intervention**

**(This should form the basis of your introduction and the importance of your Question). Db Presentation**

**October 14<sup>th</sup>: Reconnaissance (Literature Review) completed. Db presentation**

**October 28<sup>th</sup>: Intervention, Data Collection and Evidence Collection.  
Db presentation**

**November 24<sup>th</sup>: Writing your analysis, implications & reflections**

**December 9<sup>th</sup>: Presentation and final paper due for classroom discussion**

**December 16<sup>th</sup>: Discussions on final Action Research project papers completed**

2. *Presentation of AR (35%)*: each participant will present their ongoing progress on his/her Action Research project to the class via the appropriate Db strands setup by the instructor. Each presentation may showcase a variety of technology choices but Powerpoints may be the preferred way and should consist of the following elements: Introduction, Inquiry Questions, Methodology, Findings and Implications for Practice. Each student will provide an executive summary and a brief list of important resources. The presentations will be evaluated on: communication skills, clarity, creative use of technology to convey progress, understanding of the process of action research and articulation of the implications for practice.
3. *Final Action Research Paper (35%)*: each participant will write a report which includes the following sections – Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis (with accompanying samples/examples), Findings, Implications for Practice and Reflections. All papers will follow APA format. All Final Action Research Papers will be posted by December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010 so that final classroom discussion can be completed by the end of course date. Required Performance Based Assessment.

NOTE: This is an advanced graduate level course being delivered solely in an online format. Therefore the quality of your work, consistent weekly “attendance” and informed participation are expected to be of the highest caliber. Unless it is an emergency situation, no absences from the online classroom are excused. After the first week of class, the classroom will be run in an asynchronistic manner, which should allow students to be present sometime throughout each week. Should you need to miss a weekly class it is your responsibility to inform the instructor ahead of time, turn in your assignments ahead of time, and do your utmost to remain current in the class. Should you need special assistance because of identified learning needs please contact the instructor immediately.

**Honor Code:** To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust and fairness among all member of the George Mason University and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the members of George Mason University have set forth the following code of honor. Any individual who is caught in the act of cheating, attempting to cheat, plagiarizing or stealing will be brought forth before a council of their peers. In the even that the individual is found guilty, he or she will be punished accordingly. For further

information, please refer to the University Catalog or website at [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu) The Honor Code may be found outline at <http://www.gmu.edu/facstaff/handbook/aD.html>.

**Americans with Disabilities:** This syllabus is subject to change based on the needs of the class as identified under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This act prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in the series, programs or activities of all State and local governments. Under ADA a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity such as: learning, working, walking, speaking, hearing, breathing, and/or taking care of oneself. If a student has a disability and needs course adaptations or accommodations because of that disability, it must be established with the faculty, in writing, at the beginning of the semester so that arrangements can be made. Please call the Disabilities Resource Center for required documentation (703-993-2474). The Disability Resource Center website is at <http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc/>