George Mason University
College of Education & Human Development/Graduate School of Education
FAST TRAIN Program

EDCI 777, "Research to Practice"/Spring-Summer 2011

Key Information
Instructor: Kristien Zenkov, PhD, Associate Professor
Office/hours: Aquia Hall 355, Fairfax campus; meetings (via Skype or face-to-face by appointment
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Class Meetings
On-line: Tues, Mar 1st – Mon, Jun 20th; Fairfax campus (TBA) Tues, Jul 20th – Fri, Jul 29th
Please note that due to the nature of this course, this class will meet via Blackboard the majority of the time, followed by eight days of face-to-face meetings as a whole group in late July. On-line class sessions will run from each Tuesday until the following Monday (midnight US eastern standard time). Students may request a voice, face-to-face, or chat conference at any time; voice and chat conferences will be conducted via Skype (free Skype© software is available at **http://www.skype.com/intl/en/get-skype/**). Please include your "Skype Name" and your time zone in your conference request. I am happy to clarify and lend assistance on assignments, but please contact me within a reasonable timeframe. I look forward to collaborating with each of you as you work toward your goals.

Catalog Description
Prerequisites: All other program courses except elective, or permission of instructor
EDCI 777 emphasizes the teacher as a change agent through critical inquiry into practice. The course includes an overview of the basic elements of educational research, methods (quantitative and qualitative), questions addressed, design, and data collection and analysis.

Course Outcomes
Upon completion of the course, participants will achieve the following outcomes:
- Identify the basic elements of educational research, including methods (quantitative and qualitative), questions addressed, design, data collection and analysis, validity and reliability
- Formulate an inquiry/action research question that is relevant to their work setting
- Design and conduct an inquiry/action research study
- Use inquiry/action research as a foundation for professional growth, improvement of instruction, and advocacy
- Identify strategies for sharing the results of inquiry/action research

Course Delivery
The course is delivered through a variety of on-line, face-to-face, and individualized instructional approaches. Most on-line sessions will be conducted in an asynchronous format, but students will be expected to post their own reflections and assignments and respond to peers' and instructors' postings and feedback by the end of each designated class week (midnight US eastern standard time each Monday). During class meetings there will be large group, small group, and individual activities.

Participants conduct independent research, as well as communicate with each other and the instructor via electronic media. In general, we will engage in four activities during our time together:
1. Mini-lectures, activities, and discussions related to research methods led by the instructor and supported by course text and other selected readings
2. Discussions of the week's readings led by the instructor and course participants
3. Research and "Focus Session" group meetings in which students will concentrate on selected readings and provide feedback and support for each others' writing and research process
4. Individual, small group, and whole group meetings to discuss research efforts

Please note that because you have much to learn from each other, and because teaching is often a collaborative effort, you will frequently work in groups. This will give you a chance to bounce ideas off each other, to be exposed to a variety of perspectives (rather than only the professor's), and to support each other as you continue to hone your teaching and researching skills.

Course Overview

Teachers are often encouraged to implement "research-based" practices, required to attend workshops where research findings are presented, provided with lists of books that synthesize research, and asked to suggest changes in practice based on the implications of research. Although these practices have their usefulness, the assumption implicit in much of the discourse surrounding educational research is that teachers are *consumers* and/or *objects* of research, rather than *producers* of research. The past decade has seen a growing movement to upend those assumptions through an emphasis on the importance of teacher research. Thus, the research and theory we will read and the methodologies with which we will engage are those associated with "teacher research" (i.e., research conducted by teachers for professional purposes). Teacher research positions teachers as *producers* of knowledge—professionals who can learn about and improve their practice by studying important questions that grow from their own experiences and observations.

This class is designed to support you in using and building on the ideas and content you have encountered in your previous coursework. Most importantly, the course assists you as you consider ways to better support children and youth. In other words, your current and future students are at the center of our work. Toward these ends, the course requires you to conceptualize, design, and begin to implement an original research project in your school/classroom. Only if we attempt to live these action research (also called "teacher research" and "practitioner research") processes in this course will you be able to use them eventually in your own teaching practices. Thus, for every activity in this course, you must act and study with multiple lenses—as a student, teacher, and advocate. Although the work required to achieve these goals is intensive, the course is designed to provide you with much support. You will need to hit the ground running, starting your research project early, and working on it steadily. Through our readings, we will explore research methodologies, analyses of the history and impact of teacher research, and the efforts of other teacher researchers. Our readings and discussions will help you develop your own rationale and "road map" for your inquiry project. We will dig into readings together, write often and share our writing with one another, and support each other in our research goals.

Instructor Introduction and Theoretical Framework

I believe that the best teachers know themselves as literate people in the broadest sense. I will ask you also to know yourselves as professionals with a variety of literacies, including those of photographers, visual sociologists, and community constituents. Teachers and those who work with children and youth must be resilient individuals who are willing to take risks to let school literacies matter to themselves, their students, and the broader community. I will expect you to be your best, brightest, most thoughtful, and most creative selves. I intend that this course will be one that you remember, and that you will care passionately about the work we do. I will have uncompromising professional standards for your behavior, participation, and openness. At the same time, I will do everything possible to ensure that you meet these standards. My hope is that we will experience much intellectual camaraderie, engaging discussion, and laughter as we proceed. I encourage you to take risks and celebrate the risks taken by your colleagues.

I bring the perspectives of a veteran teacher and teacher educator, as well as the points of view of a community activist and artist. I approach all educational experiences with the goal of helping students to learn to be

active, creative, "real world" members of a just society. It is important for us as educators to approach our teaching with a simultaneously critical and creative perspective: when we assess current teaching practices, we also begin to develop new ones. I offer an explicit critique of schooling: as a classroom teacher with more than fifteen years experience, an active scholar, and an advocate for children and youth and schools, playing a critical role is my right and responsibility. It is my hope that you will take on this same role. Perhaps most importantly to you, I have spent my school and university teaching career working across school and university settings with a wide range of children and youth, so I am confident that I'll be able to support you in this class. Finally, much as you as university students must be concerned with your own development and others' assessments of your class efforts, I am committed to my growth as a teacher and teacher educator. I will ask for your support in my research as I study your learning and your use of visual tools in your research processes.

I will ask you to think of the teaching strategies we use in class and that you plan to use as research interventions in your own classroom in three categories, which are framed by an assessment-driven, "backwards" design:

1) "Ways Out": What is the student's "way out" of the text or activity with which you are asking them to engage? That is, what artifacts and demonstrations will the student complete to exhibit her/his comprehension of the key ideas that they are encountering? How will you assess students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes? How will students <u>demonstrate</u> their retention of and relationship to the material?

2) "Ways In": What is the student's "way in" to this text or activity? That is, how are you approaching the student's natural interests in or motivations for this assignment? Think about how you might use the student's existing "literacies" to do this. What specific strategies will you use?

3) "Ways Through": What are students' "ways through" this text or activity? That is, what strategies and tools are you giving students to make sense of and understand the sources you're using with this assignment? How will students <u>translate</u> the material into their own terms?

College of Education and Human Development 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://gse.gmu.edu/facultystaffres/profdisp.htm** for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See **http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/** for the full honor code.

- All students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. [See **http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html**].
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the Mason Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. [See **http://ods.gmu.edu**].
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers a wide range of services to students that are provided by a staff of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors. The Center provides individual and group counseling, workshops, and outreach programs – experiences to enhance a student's personal and academic performance. [See **http://caps.gmu.edu**].
- All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students through their Mason e-mail account only. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly.
- University policy states that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the professor.

Emergency Notification

The university utilizes a communication system to reach all students, faculty, and staff with emergency information (e.g., in case of severe weather). You can be sure that you are registered with the Mason Alert system by visiting **https://alert.gmu.edu**. An emergency poster can also be found in each Mason classroom. Information about Mason emergency response plans can be found at **http://cert.gmu.edu/**.

Human Subjects Research Review Process

Any research or action research that will be publicly disseminated must have prior approval of the GMU Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). Inquiry/action research that is used solely for the purpose of studying pedagogical aspects may be conducted without additional permission but cannot be disseminated. Detailed information on what is involved in submitting a proposal to the Review Board is available from the following web site: **http://www.gmu.edu/research/ORSP/index.html**. I am also happy to provide you with examples of approved HSRB applications, and you might be interested in sharing your work in the on-line *Journal of Teacher Research*, currently in development by Dr. Zenkov and colleagues from George Mason, Cleveland State University, and the University of Houston-Downtown.

Required Texts

Bell, A. (2008). *The impact of digital photography among low-achieving adolescents.* Unpublished masters teacher research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.

Ewaida, M. (2008). *Hearing their own voices: The effects of using multicultural literature with English language learners.* Unpublished masters teacher research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.

Mills, G.E. (2011). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Education, Inc, Merrill Prentice Hall. ISBN: 978013700314-3.

Misiura, K. (2009). *Daily teacher book talks: How do they affect third grade students' book selection and reading engagement?* Unpublished masters teacher research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.

Sayers, A. (2009). *The effect of paired writing on an English Language Learner's writing engagement and motivation.* Unpublished masters teacher research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.

Zenkov, K. & Harmon, J. (2009). Picturing a writing process: Using photovoice to learn how to teach writing to urban youth. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 52*(7), 575-584. Note: This article will be provided electronically.

Additional readings available on-line and/or in class.

Materials

In addition to the books required for this course, you will need access to a digital camera and a computer (with web, email, and printing privileges). As well, I recommend that you join at least one professional association (e.g., the National Council of Teachers of English) *now*: the resources to which you have access are generally incredible and the cost is reasonable for student members.

Resources

Articles and Books

American Psychological Association (2010). *Publications manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. ISBN: 978143380561-5.

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

Bell, J. (1993). *Doing your research project: A guide for first-time researchers in education and social science.* Buckingham, England: Open University Press.

Biancarosa, G. & Snow, C.E. (2004). *Reading next—A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.* Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education, 12.

Burnaford, G., Fischer, F. & Hobson, D. (1996). *Teachers doing research: Practical possibilities.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Carlisle, L.R., Jackson, B. & George, A. (2006). Principles of social justice education: The social justice education in schools project. *Equity & Excellence in Education 39*, 55-64.

Children's Defense Fund. (2008). *The state of America's children yearbook.* Available: **www.childrensdefense.org/ac2001/Acol.ASP**.

Chiseri-Strater, E. & Sunstein, B. (2006). *What works? A practical guide for teacher research.* Heinemann. Note: Intro and sample chapter can be found at http://books.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E00713/chapter9.pdf and ordered on-line at http://books.heinemann.com/products/E00713.aspx**.**

Cochran-Smith, M., Lytle, S.L (1999). The teacher research movement: A decade later. *Educational Researcher, 28*(7), 15-25.

Cook-Sather, A. (2009). *Learning from the student's perspective: A methods sourcebook for effective teaching.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Courtland, M.C., & Gambell, T.J. (1994*). Curriculum Planning in the Language Arts K-12: A Holistic Perspective.* North York, Ontario: Captus Press.

Duncan-Andrade, J. (2005). Toward teacher development for the urban in urban teaching. *Teaching Education, 15*, 339-350.

Ewald, W. (2001). *I wanna take me a picture: Teaching photography and writing to children.* Boston: Center for Documentary Studies/Beacon.

Falk, B. & Blumenreich, M. (2005). *The power of questions: A guide to teacher and student research.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.