



Promoting Learning  Development Across the Lifespan

**George Mason University**  
**College of Education & Human Development/Graduate School of Education**  
**Secondary Education Program**

**EDUC 675, “Research in Secondary Education”/Fall 2012 (3 credits)**

**Key Information**

Instructor: Kristien Zenkov, PhD, Associate Professor  
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College of Education and Human Development, Fairfax, VA 22030

**Class Meetings**

When our class meets on campus (for approximately nine sessions), we will gather in Thompson Hall Room L003. We will also hold asynchronous “meetings” approximately every other week throughout the semester (for approximately seven sessions). Finally, we will have two rounds of individual conferences – one at the beginning and one at the end of the semester – to help you formulate your research focus and then complete your project.

**Catalog Description**

*Pre-requisites: Licensure and EDUC 674; to be taken as the last course in the M.Ed.*

*Co-requisite: M.Ed. exit requirement*

The portfolio (or exit requirement) is submitted during the semester the candidate is enrolled in EDUC 675. This course helps beginning teachers become more effective by critiquing various research paradigms, reviewing the research literature, and systematically collecting and interpreting evidence to improve practice. EDUC 675 emphasizes linking evidence of student learning to make informed instructional decisions. Specifically, this course is designed to help beginning teachers understand and enact concepts and principles of action research in secondary classrooms. Students will learn how to identify and use research literature and systematic evidence to improve practice with a focus on students’ learning.

*Note: This course requires that you have access to a classroom or appropriate research site to conduct your research. If you do not have your own classroom, you will need to let me know during our first class. I will suggest alternative arrangements that have been used successfully in the past.*

### **Relationships to Professional Standards**

By the end of this course students will demonstrate an understanding and application of subject area standards aligned with the National Content Standards and identified by their Specialized Professional Association (SPA):

- Social studies teachers: National Council for the Social Studies, <http://www.ncss.org/>
- English teachers: National Council of Teachers of English, <http://www.ncte.org/>
- Math teachers: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, <http://www.nctm.org/>
- Science teachers: National Science Teachers Association, <http://www.nsta.org/>

Students should also have an understanding and application of teaching and learning standards as outlined by the Interstate New Teacher Assistance and Support Consortium (INTASC):

- [www.ccsso.org/Documents/2011/InTASC\\_Model\\_Core\\_Teaching\\_Standards\\_2011.pdf](http://www.ccsso.org/Documents/2011/InTASC_Model_Core_Teaching_Standards_2011.pdf)

Finally, students should be aware of the skills framework of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the professional guidelines offered by the National Board for Teaching Standards:

- [www.p21.org/overview/skills-framework](http://www.p21.org/overview/skills-framework)
- [http://www.nbpts.org/the\\_standards/the\\_five\\_core\\_propositio](http://www.nbpts.org/the_standards/the_five_core_propositio)

### **CEHD Core Values**

In 2006, the College of Education and Human Development (CEHD) adopted five core values: collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. This course supports each of these values by providing multiple learning experiences that necessitate collaboration; affording students opportunities to reflect on their teacher leadership roles in school contexts; requiring them to design and engage in innovative research-based practice; and calling on students to analyze and reflect on their pedagogies in light of social justice issues. These Core Values are aligned with course outcomes as described below.

### **Course Outcomes and Objectives**

This course is designed to enable students to:

- 1) demonstrate an understanding of the process and components used in action research by conducting and assessing a chosen scholarly inquiry situated in their classroom and impact on students' learning (research-based practice; innovation)
- 2) prepare a research proposal which makes explicit links between theory and practice (research-based practice)
- 3) examine ethical considerations when conducting action research (research-based practice; social justice)
- 4) conduct action research which includes: research question(s), research proposal; review of related literature; methods; data collection/analysis; findings; discussion of impact on students, teacher, and education field (research-based practice)
- 5) participate in "critical collaborative inquiries" to gain multiple perspectives in interpreting research and for validation and peer review of research (collaboration; ethical leadership)

- 6) demonstrate integration of national and state standards for content and pedagogy as related to their research question(s) by reflecting on their own teaching practice and its impact on students' learning (SPA standards respective to students' discipline)
- 7) demonstrate skills in the application of technology and use of resources in action research (innovation)

Students will achieve these outcomes through the following objectives:

- 1) Prepare a research proposal that includes the research context, a problem statement, a research question and outcomes, and a data collection plan which makes explicit links between theory and practice. Students will brainstorm (in whole class and small group settings), give peer feedback online, self-reflect, and post a viable plan to conduct a research study in the classroom. Students will access resources and references, and conduct a review of the literature online. The proposal will be judged on its viability and level of practical application, given the time constraints of the semester.
- 2) Conduct an action research project in a local school or classroom. Students will prepare all data collection instruments to conduct the study. Prior to implementation, data collection instruments will be peer and instructor reviewed in online and/or face-to-face discussion forums. Students will be assigned in research teams that will troubleshoot and provide support as data is collected. Results will be shared and students will provide feedback to each other on the presentation and interpretation of data.
- 3) Review professional strengths and weaknesses of the action research process through peer review and self-assessment. Students will participate in weekly on-line and/or face-to-face discussions of their progress throughout the research process.
- 4) Write an action research report (using APA format) that includes the context for the study, research question(s) and outcomes, a review of related literature, methodology, data collection/analysis, implications, limitations, and an action plan. Students will review example research reports from prior semesters. Students will post a draft of their report on Blackboard for peer and instructor review and feedback using the rubric used to assess the report. Students will present a summary of their report to their peers in brief in-class presentations and a poster session format at the end of the semester.
- 5) Prepare and defend a Best Practices Showcase of artifacts/reflections related to student learning and effective teaching, with reflections that indicate how the artifacts demonstrate mastery of the INTASC standards and reflect on your growth and professional development throughout the secondary education masters program. A rubric will be used to assess the Best Practices Showcase. Presentations of the Best Practices Showcase will be conducted at the end of the semester in a conference for your peers, local educators, and professors in the CEHD.

### Course Delivery

The primary purpose of this course is for you to learn how to conduct action research and apply it in your classroom in order to improve your teaching and your students' learning. Throughout the course, you will complete activities that you will later be able to insert – some almost verbatim – into your final action research report. This course is approximately 50% face-to-face and 50% on-line and is considered a hybrid course. This course is student-

centered and will be conducted using a project-based approach. Your research questions and methodology will be the focus of the course and will drive readings, classroom discussions, peer review activities, reflections, and the action research project that you complete. The purpose of the discussions and peer review sessions will be to support completion of our action research projects and provide opportunities for us to learn about and analyze methods and techniques of action research. You will have the opportunity to construct knowledge and critically reflect on the research process as you complete the action research proposal and report, and then prepare your “Best Practices Showcase” presentation for graduation.

The course will be delivered through a variety of on-line, face-to-face, and individualized instructional approaches. On-line sessions will be conducted in an asynchronous format, but you will be expected to post your 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 Tuesday). During class meetings there will be large group, small group, and individual activities. Online classes are considered regular instructional time and the assignments given are the equivalent of a full in-class session. The on-line classes involve research, use of professional web sites, discussions (during specified timeframes), peer review, email with the instructor and classmates, readings, writing reflections, and other assignments. GMU’s BlackBoard course framework will be used regularly throughout the course. Your GMU email address is required for communication with the course instructor – your GMU email account must be active by the first week of class. Please inform me of any accessibility problems the first day of class.

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 the 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 concentrate on selected readings and provide feedback and support for each others’ writing and research processes
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 two decades have seen a growing movement to upend those assumptions through an emphasis on the importance of action research. Thus, the research and theory we will read and the methodologies with which we will engage are those associated with "action research" (i.e., research conducted by teachers for professional purposes). Action 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 action research, and the efforts of other action 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 will 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 demonstrate 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 translate the material into their own terms?

### **College of Education and Human Development Statements of Expectations and Resources**

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.
- For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website: <http://gse.gmu.edu/>.

### **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>.

### **Required Texts and Materials**

- Ewaida, M. (2008). *Hearing their own voices: The effects of using multicultural literature with English language learners*. Unpublished masters action research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.
- Flegal, J. (2012). *The power of choice: Examining motivation and engagement in the ESL classroom*. Unpublished masters action research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.
- Groves, M. (2011). *Readers theater: The path to reading enjoyment and comprehension*. Unpublished masters action research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.
- Mazan, A. (2012). *Reading to write: Using narratives to increase students' motivation to write*. Unpublished masters action 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.
- Marcus-Nazlica, A. (2011). *The not-so-end result: An action research study on using informative assessment to assist students in their learning*. Unpublished masters action research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.
- Sharp, R. (2012). *Learn with your friends: Literature circles with English Language Learners in Africa*. Unpublished masters action research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.
- Tumolo, M. (2011). *Interactive storytelling: A classroom case study*. Unpublished masters action research project. Note: This paper will be provided electronically.
- Vimont, D. (2011). *Listen, pause, echo: Improving reading fluency and expressiveness using video-based assisted repeated reading*. Unpublished masters action 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 and students may be required to purchase a standard-sized poster or display board for the "Best Practices Showcase." You will also need access to a digital camera and a computer (with web, email, and printing privileges).

### **Recommended Texts**

American Psychological Association (2009). *Publication manual (6th Ed.)*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association

Note: APA guidelines are available online at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

### **Resources**

#### ***Articles and Books***

- 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](http://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.
- Costa, A. and Kallick, B. (1993). Through the lens of a critical friend. *Educational Leadership*, 51(2), 49-51.
- 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.



- Freeman, D. (1998). *Doing teacher research: From inquiry to understanding*. Toronto, Canada: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Goodnough, K. (2001). Teacher development through action research. *Action in teacher education*, 23 (1), 37-46.
- Greely, K. (2000). *Why fly that way?: Living community and academic achievement*. NY: Teachers College.
- Hanks, R.S. & Ponzetti, J.J. (2004). Family studies and intergenerational studies: Intersections and opportunities. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 2(3/4), 5-22.
- Herrell, A. & Jordan, M. (2007). *Fifty strategies for training English language learners*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- 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.
- Jones, S. (2006). *Girls, social class, and literacy: What teachers can do to make a difference*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Kagan, D.M. (1993). *Laura and Jim and what they taught me about the gap between educational theory and practice*. NY: State University of New York Press.
- Kosnik, C., Beck, C., Freese, A.R., & Samaras, A.P. (Eds.), (2006). *Making a difference in teacher education through self-study: Studies of personal, professional, and program renewal*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational Research*, 35(7), 3-12.
- Leedy, P.D., and Ormrod, J.E. (2001). *Practical research: Planning and design*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Lucas, T. & Villegas, A.M. (2003). *Educating culturally responsive teachers: A coherent approach*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Macintyre, C. (2000). *The art of action research in the classroom*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- MacLean, M. & Mohr, M. (1999). *Teacher-researchers at work*. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project.
- Mahiri, J. (Ed). (2004). *What they don't learn in school: Literacy in the lives of urban youth*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Marquez-Zenkov, K. (2007). Through city students' eyes: Urban students' beliefs about school's purposes, supports, and impediments. *Visual Studies*, 22(2), 138-154.
- Marquez-Zenkov, K., & Harmon, J.A. (2007). "Seeing" English in the city: Using photography to understand students' literacy relationships. *English Journal*, 96(6), 24-30.
- Marzano, R., Pickering, D., & Pollock, J. (2004). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Prentice Hall.
- McNiff, J., Lomax, P., & Whitehead, J. (2003). The main features of action research process. In *You and your action research project*. London and NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Mertler, C.A. & Charles, C.M. (2011). *Introduction to educational research* (7th ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon. ISBN: 013701344-2.
- Mitra, D. (2007). Student voice in school reform: From listening to leadership. In D. Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (Eds.), *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary school*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer Publishers.

- Moje, E.B., & Hinchman, K. (2004). Culturally responsive practices for youth literacy learning. In J. Dole & T. Jetton (Eds.), *Adolescent literacy research and practice* (pp. 331-350). New York: Guilford Press.
- Moje, E.B. (2008). The complex world of adolescent literacy: Myths, motivations, and mysteries. *Harvard Educational Review*, Spring 2008, 107-154.
- Morrell, E. and Duncan-Andrade, J. (2006). Popular culture and critical media pedagogy in secondary literacy classrooms. *International Journal of Learning*, 12, 2005/2006.
- Morrell, E. (2007). *Critical literacy and urban youth: Pedagogies of access, dissent, and liberation*. New York: Routledge.
- Myers, E. & Rust, F. (2003). *Taking action with teacher research*. Heinemann.
- Nieto, S. (2003). *What keeps teachers going?* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Oakes, J. & Lipton, M. (2003). *Teaching to change the world, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Raggl, A. & Schratz, M. (2004). Using visuals to release pupil's voices: Emotional pathways to enhancing thinking and reflecting on learning. In C. Pole (Ed.), *Seeing is believing? Approaches to visual research (Volume 7)*. New York, NY: Elsevier.
- Richardson, L. (1998). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (volume 2). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Rodgers, C. (2006). Attending to student voice: The role of descriptive feedback in learning and teaching. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 36(2), 209-237.
- Rogers, R., et al. (2005). Professional development for social transformation: The literacy for social justice research group. *Language Arts*, 82(5), 347-358.
- Sagor, R. (1993). *How to conduct collaborative action research*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Samaras, A. P. (2011). *Self-study teacher research: Improving your practice through collaborative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Samaras, A. P., & Freese, A. R. (2006). *Self-study of teaching practices primer*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Samaras, A. P., Freese, A. R., Kosnik, C., & Beck, C. (Eds.) (2008). *Learning communities in practice*. The Netherlands: Springer Press.
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Singer, Jessica. (2006). *Stirring up justice: Writing and reading to change the world*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. ISBN: 0325007470
- Street, B. (2003). What's "new" in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 5(2), pp. 1-14.
- Teel, K., & Obidah, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Building racial and cultural competence in the classroom: Strategies from urban educators*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Temple, C., Ogle, D., Crawford, A., Frepon, P. (2008): *All children read: Teaching for literacy in today's diverse classrooms*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Thomas, R. M. (2005). *Teachers doing research: An introductory guidebook*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Van Horn, L. (2008). *Reading photographs to write with meaning and purpose, grades 4-12*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Villegas, A. & Lucas, T. (2007). The culturally responsive teacher. *Educational Leadership*. 64(6), 28-33.

- Whitford, B. L. & Wood, D.R. (2010). *Teachers learning in community: Realities and possibilities*. Albany, NY: SUNY.
- Yonezawa, S., & Jones, M. (2007). Using student voices to inform and evaluate secondary school reform. In D. Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (Eds.), *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary school* (pp. 681-710). The Netherlands: Springer Publishers.
- Zenkov, K., Harmon, J., van Lier, P., & Marquez, M. (2008). Picture this: Seeing diverse city students' ideas about schools' purposes, impediments, and supports. *Multicultural Perspectives*.

### ***Qualitative Analysis***

- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Czaja, R., & Blair, J. (1996). *Designing surveys: A guide to decisions and procedures*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Maxwell, J.A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach (2nd Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods (2nd Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

### ***Quantitative Analysis and Statistics***

- Bartz, A. E. (1999). *Basic statistical concepts (4th ed)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Cronk, B. C. (2002). *How to use SPSS: A step-by-step guide to analysis and interpretation (2nd ed)*. Los Angeles, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.
- Jaeger, R. M. (1993). *Statistics: A spectator sport (Second Edition)*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Rovessi, C., & Carroll, D. J. (2002). *Statistics made simple for school leaders*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Salkind, N. (2000). *Statistics for people who think they hate statistics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### ***Research and Writing***

- Booth, W.C., Colomb, G.G., & Williams, J.M. (1995). *The craft of research*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago.
- Dahl, K.K. (1992). *Teacher as writer: Entering the professional conversation*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

### ***General Websites***

- George Mason University Library: <http://library.gmu.edu/>
- What Kids Can Do: [www.whatkidscando.org](http://www.whatkidscando.org)
- Through Students' Eyes: [www.throughstudenteyes.org](http://www.throughstudenteyes.org)
- International Visual Sociology Association (IVSA): [www.visualsociology.org](http://www.visualsociology.org)

### ***Action/Teacher Research/Research Websites***

- [http://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/tr\\_action/](http://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/tr_action/) (GMU teacher research site)
- <http://www.accessexcellence.org/LC/TL/AR/> (teacher research site)

- <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ntrp/> (UK teacher research site)
- <http://www.teacherresearch.net/> (international teacher research site)
- <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/english/composition/wits/research/index.html>
- <http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/Dox/basics.html>

### *Data Collection Tools*

- Go to Googledocs, then "spreadsheets" to create survey.
- Survey Monkey: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/home.asp>

### *National Reports and Test Reporting Centers*

- A Nation at Risk: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/NatAtRisk/risk.html>
- The Nation's Report Card/National Assessment of Educational Progress: <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>
- National Center for Educational Statistics: <http://nces.ed.gov/help/sitemap.asp>
- TIMSS and PIRLS (The International Math and Science Study and International Literacy Study): <http://www.timss.org/>
- Best Evidence/School Reform Reports/School Models (Johns Hopkins University): <http://www.bestevidence.org/index.htm>

### *Virginia State Standards*

- Virginia Department of Education: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/>
- State of Virginia, SOL Resources: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Instruction/sol.html>
- State of Virginia Standards of Learning Test Information: <http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/src/SOLassessments.shtml>

## Course Requirements

### *General*

All assignments should be turned in on the due date indicated in the schedule below via Blackboard (email attachments are an option we can discuss). The submission deadline for assignments is Wednesday midnight (US eastern standard time) each week. All projects must be typed, in 12-point font, with one-inch margins, double-spaced, in Times New Roman font, and follow APA guidelines. Writing quality (including mechanics, organization, and content) is figured into the overall points for each writing assignment, so please proofread carefully. Late papers and projects will not be accepted without penalty, excepting extraordinary circumstances. Since this is a professional development course (post licensure), high quality work (i.e., "A" work) is expected on all assignments and in class participation. I am happy to clarify and lend assistance on projects and assignments, but please contact me within a reasonable timeframe. Please title each assignment with the name of the project/assignment, your last name, and the date you are submitting it (e.g., Action Research Question Adam Smith: (Action\_Research\_Question\_Smith\_9-1-12)). *Note: I reserve the right to add, alter, or omit any assignment as necessary during the course of the semester.*

### *Attendance and Participation (15 points)*

Students are expected to attend *all* class periods of courses for which they register. Class participation both in on-line and face-to-face settings is important not only to the

individual student, but to the class as whole. Class participation is a factor in grading; instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation and as a result lower the grade as stated in the course syllabus. Participants are expected to read the assigned materials, complete on-line activities including pre-session Blackboard assignments, arrive promptly, attend all class meetings for the entire session, and participate in on-line and face-to-face class discussions. It is your responsibility to offer insights, questions, comments, and concerns from the readings; I suggest that you keep a reading log that includes both notes on and reactions to each reading. This log could also contain the field notes that you will take on your classroom as you complete your research project. If, due to an emergency, you will not be able to participate during a given week of class, please contact me as soon as possible and certainly prior to any face-to-face class time; it’s best to do so via my email or my mobile phone (216.470.2384). Students are responsible for obtaining information given during class discussions despite attendance. Demonstration of positive and collaborative professional dispositions towards colleagues during peer review, along with a willingness to accept constructive criticism, is a course expectation.

By virtue of agreeing to work together in this course we instantly formed a new community. This community will be rooted in mutual respect and shared responsibility; these foundations translate into consistent and punctual attendance and active participation in all class activities. My goal is to develop a comfortable on-line and face-to-face classroom community where risk-taking is encouraged; we can only grow through such open-heartedness. Your attendance, thoughtfulness, clarity, and active sharing of responsibility for our classroom community will affect your grade. It is your responsibility to share and respond with insights, questions, comments, concerns, artifacts, and images from the readings and your teaching and research experiences. Absences and tardies – in both on-line and campus class sessions – will impact your grade. Two tardies are equal to one absence, and missing 30% or more of class sessions will result in automatic course failure. Please turn off all mobile phones, computers, and pagers when you participate in our class.

As part of your course participation, you will have the opportunity to work with “critical friends” in the process of developing your final research project. A critical friend can be defined as a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critiques of a person’s work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work. Throughout the term you will be expected to review others’ work and to share your work with others. This is far more than a peer editing process; you and your critical friends are mutually engaged in advancing the thinking represented in each others’ final papers. You will share weekly updates in class, sending and corresponding around research memos, brainstorming ideas as a teacher about the classroom dilemma you are researching, exchanging ideas for strategies and lessons, sharing how you are integrating standards in meaningful ways, and conducting a peer reviews of the draft research report components. Critical friends provide support as well as a feedback loop to improve your practice. It is *critical* to have friends in research but critical friends are *not critical* in their approach with each other. Establish ground rules with “critical friends” and visit them often. Use your group Blackboard space to post files and communicate frequently.

*Note: Class participation (and Blackboard Discussion Board participation) may include development an action research proposal, creation of a tentative project timeline, completion of a weekly researcher log of your project progress, drafting of weekly exit notes after our class sessions, and/or the completion of "analytic memos."*

### ***Blackboard Participation and Assignments (15 points)***

Participants are expected to log onto Blackboard at least three times weekly. The Blackboard URL is <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>. Each member of our class will be responsible for contributing at least one posting to each discussion, accompanied by one image/artifact that is related to the ideas and/or events described in your posting. Each class member will also be required to respond to at least four peers each week, three of whom will be scheduled on a rotating basis and at least one other of your choosing. Please post contributions by the end of the week in which the topic is discussed. Discussion postings should be thorough and thoughtful. Just posting an "I agree/disagree with your comment" or "I think the same" to someone else's thoughts is not considered adequate. *Note: Access to the Internet to search for resources and to engage in online course related activity is required approximately three times per week.*

1) Assignment #1 (due Sept 4<sup>th</sup>)

Post a brief biographical sketch introducing yourself to the class. Prepare your sketch in Microsoft Word or another word processing program. Copy and paste this sketch to the Blackboard "Discussion Board." Also attach a photo of yourself (not larger than 300 pixels by 300 pixels), preferably a close up of you in your work environment. Then, please choose and respond to at least two of the following questions on the Discussion Board and upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- As you understand it, what is the scientific method and what is its purpose?
- When you hear the term "education research" what do you think?
- What has your experience been in reading education research studies, reports or articles? How have they been beneficial?
- Have you conducted or taken part in a research project or study? If so, please describe the experience, including your role.

2) Assignment #2 (due Sept 11<sup>th</sup>)

Please respond to BOTH of the following questions on the Discussion Board, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- What problem or issue in your class would you like to make your area of focus? Why?
- Action Research is often criticized because the outcomes are not generalizable. How might you respond to this concern in defending action research as a viable research method?

3) Assignment #3 (due Sept 18<sup>th</sup>)

On p. 60 Mills lists the nine steps in the "Action Research Plan." Please prepare the following first three steps and upload them to the Assignments section on Bb, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- i) Write an area-of-focus statement

- ii) Define the variables
  - iii) Develop a research question
- 4) Assignment #4 (due Sept 25<sup>th</sup>)  
Please respond to ONE of the following items on the Discussion Board, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:
- On p. 92 Mills defines the term "triangulation." How will you triangulate the data collection in your study? Why did you choose these sources?
  - How will you insure that your study is VALID?
  - How will you insure that your data collection techniques are RELIABLE?
- 5) Assignment #5 (due Oct 2<sup>nd</sup>)  
Please respond to ONE of the following questions on the Discussion Board, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:
- What steps will you take to insure that your study has met all ethical challenges?
  - What is your school's ethics policy regarding the collection of data from students?
- 6) Assignment #6 (due Oct 9<sup>th</sup>)  
Return to the Action Research Plan on p. 60 in Mills. Please upload your responses to the following items to the Assignments section of Bb, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:
- iv) Describe the intervention or innovations
  - v) Describe the membership of the action research group
  - vi) Describe negotiations that need to be undertaken
  - vii) Develop a timeline
  - viii) Develop a statement of resources
  - ix) Describe the data collection sources and process, including plan for triangulation.
- 7) Assignment #7 (due Oct 16<sup>th</sup>)  
Prepare a list of ten references (APA style) you have identified so far in your review of the literature that appear to be relevant to your study. References should be from refereed journals, books, and scholarly compilations. Please upload your list of references to the Assignments section of Bb, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe.
- 8) Assignment #8 (due Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>)  
During the data collection period, please respond each week to the following questions: 1) What is an example of the primary, most interesting, most surprising, most consistent, or most representative data you have gathered this week? 2) What initial sense (analysis!) have you made of any data you collected this week or thus far in your study? Be sure to upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe in response to these questions.
- 9) Assignment #9 (due Oct 30<sup>th</sup>)  
During the data collection period, please respond each week to the following questions: 1) What is an example of the primary, most interesting, most surprising, most consistent, or most representative data you have gathered this week? 2) What

initial sense (analysis!) have you made of any data you collected this week or thus far in your study? Be sure to upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe in response to these questions.

10) Assignment #10 (due Nov 6<sup>th</sup>)

During the data collection period, please respond each week to the following questions: 1) What is an example of the primary, most interesting, most surprising, most consistent, or most representative data you have gathered this week? 2) What initial sense (analysis!) have you made of any data you collected this week or thus far in your study? Be sure to upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe in response to these questions.

11) Assignment #11 (due Nov 13<sup>th</sup>)

During the data collection period, please respond each week to the following questions: 1) What is an example of the primary, most interesting, most surprising, most consistent, or most representative data you have gathered this week? 2) What initial sense (analysis!) have you made of any data you collected this week or thus far in your study? Be sure to upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe in response to these questions.

12) Assignment #12 (due Nov 20<sup>th</sup>)

For this week's posting to which I would like everyone to respond please consider the following: What have been your top two or three questions about this action research work thus far? That is, questions about the PROCESS of doing action research, the challenges of doing it. And how would you answer those questions now, if such a question was posed to you by someone else planning to take this course or conduct an action research project in the future? (I will compile these questions and answers into a list for all of us to consider).

13) Assignment #13 (due Nov 27<sup>th</sup>)

On p. 182 Mills presents an Outline format for an Action Research Report. Please complete the outline and upload it to the Assignments section on Blackboard. Be sure to upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe.

***Action Research Project Draft Components (15 points)***

You will submit for instructor and peer review the following draft sections of your action research paper: introduction/contexts, literature review, methodology, findings, discussion/action plan. Due dates of these drafts are listed in the schedule below, and the specific elements of these sections will be provided via samples, descriptions, and rubrics. Completing these draft elements will scaffold you toward completion of your final project a very good thing.

***Focus Group Sessions (5 points)***

Working in small groups (3-4), participants will choose a topic related to their research interests, examine the topic or issue within the context of what they have learned in the master's program, review at least one research article on their topic, present their findings to the whole class, and engage the class in a discussion of the topic. Do your best to use a discussion strategy that you and your peers might implement in your own school settings. Groups must provide a two-page summary and critique of their research findings, with copies



for all members of our class. These presentations must relate to both the research information they have read and to their own experiences with the topic. For example, a group may elect to present ideas on the topic of “differentiating instruction for English Speakers of Other Languages and/or international students.” The group presentation would highlight ideas on the topic and generate class discussion on differentiating instruction. Please email members of our class with an article URL at least one week in advance of your presentation session so that your peers can read this article.

### ***Action Research Project (50 points)***

Participants will design and conduct an action research project that is relevant to their present or future teaching positions. Outlines, examples, descriptions, and rubrics of these projects will be provided. You will write a literature review and proposal for this project, collect and analyze preliminary data, and share the results of your study with both our class (and potentially an outside audience) in a PowerPoint presentation. It is possible to partner with another student for the purpose of sharing data and researching different aspects of a common topic; each partner, however, must submit an original, stand-alone report. Each participant will make an in-class ten-minute presentation (ungraded) on her/his project; an outline and examples of these presentations will be provided. Please note that projects or papers submitted for credit in another course cannot also be used for a grade in this course. Your data sources for this project must include either (or both) of the following artifacts: 1) visual representations (images or photographs of your classroom, students at work, etc.); 2) student feedback related to your research question and your teaching intervention. When considering research topics, you should identify a research question that really matters to you. It should be something about which you are curious and with which you are willing to spend time researching and learning. In the words of a former Mason student, “If you aren’t eager to spend several days curled up reading about your topic, then it’s not love, and you need to ditch it and find another topic.”

### ***Best Practices Showcase***

Best Practices Showcase (BPS) is the Masters of Education Exit Requirement through which you as a masters candidate present your understandings, applications, and critical reflections of standards-based and content pedagogical knowledge to peers, faculty, and school community partners. The essence of the BPS includes requires submission of three artifacts through which you describe, interpret and analyze best practices, assessing the impact of your pedagogies on student learning and on your professional development. *Note: The Best Practices Showcase is an ungraded requirement for our course. Students are required to successfully complete a Best Practices Showcase presentation and present it to the Secondary Program Faculty and potentially to members of the larger college community. Your grade for EDUC 675 will be posted only upon successful completion of the Best Practices Showcase requirements. Further information will be provided about BPS early in the semester.*

### **Assessment and Mastery Grading**

All assignments will be evaluated holistically using a mastery grading system; the general rubric is described below, and a specific rubric provided with each assignment. A student must demonstrate “mastery” of each requirement of an assignment; doing so will result in a “B” level score. Only if a student additionally exceeds the expectations for that requirement

through quality, quantity, or the creativity of her/his work will she/he be assessed with an "A" level score. With a mastery grading system, students must *choose* to "go above and beyond" in order to earn "A" level scores.

- "A" level score = Student work is well-organized, exceptionally thorough and thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines, as well as including additional relevant component. Student supports assertions with multiple concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified and extended to other contexts. Student work is exceptionally creative, includes additional artifacts, and/or intentionally supports peers' efforts.
- "B" level score = Student work is well organized, thorough, thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Student supports assertions with concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are fully specified.
- "C" level score = Student provides cursory responses to assignment requirements. Student followed all format and component guidelines. Development of ideas is somewhat vague, incomplete, or rudimentary. Compelling support for assertions is typically not provided.
- "F" level score = Student work is so brief that any reasonably accurate assessment is impossible.

***Grading Scale***

A+ = 100%	B = 80-84%
A = 94-99%	C = 70-79%
A- = 90-93%	F = Below 70%
B+ = 85-89%	

Incomplete (IN): This grade may be given to students who are passing a course but who may be unable to complete scheduled course work for a cause beyond reasonable control. The student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the ninth week of the next semester, not including summer term, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Faculty may grant an incomplete with a contract developed by the student with a reasonable time to complete the course at the discretion of the faculty member.

***Assignments/Possible Points***

- Attendance and Participation = 15 points
- Blackboard Participation and Assignments = 15 points
- Action Research Project Draft Components = 15 points
  - Introduction/Contexts
  - Literature Review
  - Methodology
  - Findings
  - Discussion/Action Plan)
- Focus Group Sessions = 5 points
- Action Research Project (including presentation) = 50 points
- Total = 100 points