

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development/Graduate School of Education
Teaching Culturally, Linguistically, Diverse & Exceptional Learners Program

College of
EDUCATION HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MASON



Promoting Learning Development Across the Lifespan

EDCI 777-003 Research to Practice
3 credits, Spring 2018
Thursdays, 4:30 – 7:10 pm; Enterprise Hall Room 275

PROFESSOR

Kathleen Ann Ramos, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Office phone: 703 993-6213; cell 412 805-1651
Office location: Thompson Hall 2603
Email address: kramos8@gmu.edu
Office hours: By appointment

Course Description

- A. *Prerequisites: All other program courses or permission of instructor*
- B. *University catalog course description:* 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.
- C. *Expanded Course Description:* 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 place, the assumption implicit in much of the discourses 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 course, and the framework of teacher research, offers a way to systematize our examination of our own teaching practices and our own attempts to become better learners and better

teachers. By making our questions more visible to ourselves and to our colleagues, being more rigorous in our gathering of data about the situation, and being intentional in our quest to find out how our interventions are working, we become students of teaching and thus learners in the company of our students.

This class is designed to support you in building and using the ideas and content you have encountered in your previous coursework. Most importantly, the course assists you as you consider ways to better support your students. 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 implement an original research project in your school/classroom. 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. The methods of data collection will allow you to systematically open your mind to new information about your teaching; the process of writing thick descriptions and careful analyses ask you to step back from your intuitive thoughts and assumptions and bring reasoned theories, experiences, and beliefs consciously to your research question. These readings and your discussions will help you develop your own rationale and “road map” for your inquiry project.

Delivery Method

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 instructor’s postings and feedback by the end of each designated class week. During class meetings there will be large group, small group, and individual activities.

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.

Under no circumstances, may candidates/students participate in online class sessions (either by phone or Internet) while operating motor vehicles. Further, as expected in a face-to-face class meeting, such online participation requires undivided attention to course content and communication.

Learner Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, participants will achieve the following outcomes:

- Identify the basic elements of teacher research, including methods (quantitative and qualitative), 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

Required Texts

Mertler, C. A. (2017). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators*, 5th Ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage

In addition, PowerPoints, articles or chapters from other readings may be posted on Blackboard to supplement the readings.

Teacher Research Websites

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)

Course Requirements

All assignments should be turned in on the due date indicated in the schedule below via Blackboard. The submission deadline for assignments is Monday midnight (US eastern time) each week. All projects must be typed, in 12-point *Times New Roman* font, with one inch margins, double-spaced. Writing quality (including mechanics, organization, and content) is important and is included in the overall points for each writing assignment, so please *revise* and *edit* your writing carefully.

Late papers and projects will not be accepted without penalty, excepting extraordinary circumstances. I am happy to clarify and lend assistance on projects and assignments, but please contact me within a reasonable timeframe. Note: I reserve the right to add, alter, or omit any assignment as necessary during the course of the semester.

TK20 PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT SUBMISSION REQUIREMENT

Every student registered for any TCLDEL course with a required performance-based assessment is required to submit this assessment (The INQUIRY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT) to Tk20 through Blackboard (regardless of whether the student is taking the course as an elective, a onetime course or as part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by the course instructor will also be completed in Tk20 through Blackboard. Failure to submit the assessment to Tk20 (through Blackboard) will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required Tk20 submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.”

Note: The instructor may also require the Inquiry Action Research Project to be uploaded to a Blackboard Assignment link for evaluation.

Attendance and Participation (70 points)

TCLDEL 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 a 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.

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 via email and certainly prior to any face-to-face class time.

Absences and tardies—in both on-line and campus class sessions—will impact your grade. Any week that you do not complete the required assignments will result in five points being removed from your participation grade (there is no partial credit for partial work). Missing three or more of the online/face-to-face sessions will result in automatic course failure. Missing three or more of the online/face-to-face sessions will result in automatic course failure.

TCLDEL students are expected to attend all face-to-face sessions. Tardies, or late arrivals beyond 30 minutes without prior notification, will result in one point being removed from your weekly participation points. Two face-to-face session absences will result in your grade being reduced by one letter grade. Any absence of three or more days for online/face-to-face sessions will result in automatic course failure.

Action Plan Outline Checklist (10 points)

This outline/checklist will be available on Blackboard and discussed in class. Due date is listed on the class schedule.

Draft Literature Reviews (40 points total -- 20 points each)

This assignment is intended to engage you in a thoughtful process that will help you do a bit of reconnaissance for your action research paper and continue your development as critical consumers of education literature. **Each candidate will submit two literature reviews (3-4 pages, 800-1,200 words, with 5-8 citations for each review).** In each literature review, candidates will **read, critique and synthesize** literature for their research project that relates to their question. Draft literature reviews should include how the candidate relates to the ideas of the authors of the literature considered and how these ideas can *and* cannot be applied in practice. Candidates must approach this work thoughtfully in order to select readings that relate to their Inquiry/Action Research Project.

An evaluation checklist will be uploaded to Blackboard and discussed in class for these literature reviews.

Note: Due to the size of this class, candidates will be randomly divided into two groups—Group A and Group B. Candidates in Group A will submit the first draft literature review on the first due date listed in the course schedule with candidates in Group B submitting the first draft literature review the following week. For the second draft literature review, candidates in Group B will submit during the due date listed in the course schedule with candidates in Group A submitting the second draft literature review the following week.

Data Collection Plan (10 points)

An evaluation checklist for this plan will be posted on Blackboard and discussed in class. Due date is listed on the course schedule.

Inquiry/Action Research Project (40 points)

Candidates will design and conduct an inquiry/action research project that is relevant to their present or future teaching positions. Candidates will write a literature review and proposal for this project, collect and analyze preliminary data, and share the results of their project with both our class and potentially an outside audience. **Each candidate will write a final paper detailing his/her project.** A Final Action Research Paper Checklist will be uploaded in Blackboard, discussed in class, and used to evaluate the final project. **The final project must be uploaded via TK20 and via a Blackboard Assignment Link.**

Both pre- and in-service teachers must complete this action research project/paper. It is possible to partner with another student for the purpose of sharing data and researching different aspects of a common topic. **However, each candidate must submit an original, stand-alone final project/paper.**

Please note that projects or papers submitted for credit in another course cannot also be used for a grade in this course.

Assessment and Mastery Grading

All assignments will be evaluated holistically using a mastery grading system. Specific checklists will be used to evaluate the literature reviews and final project/paper. A candidate must demonstrate “mastery” of each requirement of an assignment; doing so will result in a “B” level score. Only if a candidate additionally exceeds the expectations for that requirement—through quality and/or 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 = Candidate work is well-organized, exceptionally thorough and thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Candidate followed all format and component guidelines, as well as including additional relevant components. Candidate supports assertions with multiple concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of insights/observations are fully explained and extended to other contexts. Candidate work is exceptionally creative and includes additional artifacts.
- “B” level score = Candidate work is well organized, thorough, thoughtful, candid, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Candidate followed all format and component guidelines. Candidate supports assertions with concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are explained.
- “C” level score = Candidate provides cursory responses to assignment requirements. Candidate followed all format and component guidelines. Development of ideas is somewhat vague, incomplete, or rudimentary. Compelling support for assertions is not provided satisfactorily.
- “F” level score = Candidate work is so brief that any reasonably accurate assessment is impossible.

Incomplete (IN): This grade may be given to a candidate who is in good standing in a course but who may be unable to complete scheduled course work for a cause beyond reasonable control. The instructor may grant an incomplete grade contract to a candidate in this situation. The candidate must then complete all the remaining requirements/assignments by a specified date in the first half of the next semester, not including summer. When/if the candidate satisfactorily completes requirements/assignments as specified in the incomplete grade contract, the instructor will submit a final grade. An incomplete grade contract may be entered into with a candidate at the discretion of the faculty member. A signed copy of the contract must be completed and will be kept on file in the TCLDEL office.

Assignments/Possible Points

Attendance and Participation	70 points
Action Plan Outline	10 points
Draft Literature Reviews	40 points
Data Collection Plan	10 points
Inquiry/Action Research Project	<u>40 points</u>
Total	170 points

GRADING POLICY

At George Mason University course work is measured in terms of quantity and quality. A credit normally represents one hour per week of lecture or recitation or not fewer than two hours per week of laboratory work throughout a semester. The number of credits is a measure of quantity. The grade is a measure of quality. The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

Grade	GRADING	Grade Points	Interpretation
A+	=100	4.00	Represents mastery of the subject through effort beyond basic requirements
A	94-99	4.00	
A-	90-93	3.67	
B+	85-89	3.33	Reflects an understanding of and the ability to apply theories and principles at a basic level
B	80-84	3.00	
C*	70-79	2.00	Denotes an unacceptable level of understanding and application of the basic elements of the course
F*	<69	0.00	

Note: “C” is not satisfactory for a licensure course; “F” does not meet requirements of the Graduate School of Education

HONOR CODE & INTEGRITY OF WORK

Integrity of Work: TCLDEL students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code (<http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/>). The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated as such.

Violations of the Honor Code include:

1. Copying a paper or part of a paper from another student (current or past);
2. Reusing work that you have already submitted for another class (unless express permission has been granted by your current professor **before** you submit the work);
3. Copying the words of an author from a textbook or any printed source (including the Internet) or closely paraphrasing without providing a citation to credit the author. For examples of what should be cited, please refer to: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/>
4. You may also not “reuse” fieldwork hours. Each placement must have 20 documented hours that are solely for each course that you are in; you may be at the same site, but the same hours may not be counted towards the same course.

LATE WORK POLICY

At the graduate level all work is expected to be of high quality and submitted on the dates due. *Work submitted late will be reduced one letter grade for every day of delay.* Because we live in uncertain

times, if you have any extraordinary circumstances (*think* flood, earthquake, evacuation) that prevent you from submitting your work in a timely manner, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor as soon as possible after the circumstances occur and make arrangements to complete your work. *It is up to the discretion of the instructor to approve the late/makeup work.*

Human Subjects in Research

Any research or action research that will be disseminated publicly must have prior approval of the GMU Research Development, Integrity, and Assurance (RDIA) office or the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Human Subjects Training must be completed prior to seeking RDIA/IRB approval.

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 RDIA/IRB is available from the following web sites:

<http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/human-subjects-training/> and <http://oria.gmu.edu/research-with-humans-or-animals/institutional-review-board/>. I am happy to provide you with examples of approved RDIA/IRB applications.

PROPOSED COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC	CLASS TYPE	READINGS & DELIVERABLES
WEEK 1 January 25, 2018	Getting to know each other and our understanding of research	FACE TO FACE (F2F)	Stribling Article on AR (see BB) Mertler, Chapter 1
WEEK 2 Feb 1, 2018	Contextualizing our classrooms and understanding action research	F2F	Three Articles from Networks and review GMU Action Research site. (See BB) Mertler, Chapter 2
WEEK 3 Feb 8	Finding our focus	Online	Mertler, Chapters 3 & 4 Action Plan Checklist/Outline Due
WEEK 4 Feb 15	Understanding the role of literature	Online	TBD
WEEK 5 Feb 22	Ethics and Assumptions	F2F	Ethical Issues in Research (See BB) Literature Review 1 due for Group A
WEEK 6 March 1	Action research planning – What is your intervention?	Online	Mertler, Chapter 5 Literature Review 1 due for Group B
WEEK 7 March 8	Action research planning – Designing and planning your intervention and understanding data collection	Online	TBD Data Collection Plan Due
March 15 Mason Spring Break			

WEEK 8 March 22	Implementing your “action” and data collection	F2F	Mertler, Chapter 6 Sections B-G of Final Action Research Paper Checklist brought to class
WEEK 9 March 29	Implementing your “action” and data collection and analysis	Online	TBD Literature Review 2 Due for Group B
WEEK 10 April 5	Implementing your “action” and data collection and analysis	F2F	Mertler, Chapter 7 Literature Review 2 due for Group A
WEEK 11 April 12	Implementing your “action” and data collection and analysis	Online	Mertler, Chapter 8
WEEK 12 April 19	Implementing your “action” and data collection and analysis	F2F	Mertler, Chapter 9 Peer Review DRAFTS DUE (in hard copy and via Blackboard Assignment Link)
WEEK 13 April 26	Revising and Refining your Action Research Paper/Project	Online	TBD
Week 14 May 3	Sharing our Work	F2F	Final Presentations Final Action Research Project/Papers DUE via both TK20 and Blackboard Assignment Link

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

Professional Dispositions

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/policies-procedures/undergraduate#profdisp>

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).

- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <http://ods.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be silenced during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to Tk20 should be directed to tk20help@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/tk20>. Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/>.