

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

EDCI 777-001 Research to Practice
3 Credits, Spring 2020
Wednesdays, 4:30 – 7:10, RM Robinson B 442
January 23 – May 5, 2020

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites

Recommended Corequisite: EDCI 776

Required Prerequisite: All other program courses or permission of instructor

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.

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 about and the methodologies with which we will engage are those associated with *teacher research*, also called *action research* (i.e., research conducted by teachers for professional purposes). Central to teacher research is developing or deepening an inquiry stance. Teacher research positions teachers as *producers of knowledge*—professionals who can learn about and improve their practice by studying important questions that emerge from their own experiences and observations.

This course, and the framework of teacher action research, offers a way to systematize your examination of your own teaching practices and your own efforts 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 a line of inquiry, and being intentional in our quest to

find out how our interventions/solutions are working, we become students of teaching and thus learners in the company of our students.

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 your current and future students, who are at the center of our work. Toward these ends, this course requires you to conceptualize, design, and implement an original action research project in your school/classroom.

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 action 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 one another in our research goals.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered through a variety of online, 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.

Technical Requirements

To participate in this course, students will need to satisfy the following technical requirements:

- High-speed Internet access with standard up-to-date browsers. To get a list of Blackboard’s supported browsers see:
https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#supported-browsers

To get a list of supported operation systems on different devices see:
https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Student/Getting_Started/Browser_Support#tested-devices-and-operating-systems

- Students must maintain consistent and reliable access to their GMU email and Blackboard, as these are the official methods of communication for this course.
- Students will need a headset microphone for use with the Blackboard Collaborate web conferencing tool.
- Students may be asked to create logins and passwords on supplemental websites and/or to download trial software to their computer or tablet as part of course requirements.
- The following software plug-ins for PCs and Macs, respectively, are available for free download:
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>
 - Windows Media Player: <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/14209/get-windows-media-player>
 - Apple Quick Time Player: www.apple.com/quicktime/download/

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

1. Identify the basic elements of teacher research, including methods (quantitative and qualitative), design, data collection and analysis, validity and reliability;
2. Formulate an inquiry/action research question that is relevant to their work setting;
3. Design and conduct an inquiry/action research study;
4. Use inquiry/action research as a foundation for professional growth, improvement of instruction, and advocacy;
5. Identify strategies for sharing the results of inquiry/action research

Professional Standards

Upon completion of this course, students will have met the following professional standards:

Mason Dispositions for a Career Educator I, II, and III

- Commitment to the Profession
- Commitment to Honoring Professional Ethical Standards
- Commitment to Key Elements of Professional Knowledge

Teachers College Columbia Teacher Expectations I and II

- Lifelong Learners
- Learner-Centered Educators

NBPTS Propositions 2, 3, and 4

- Teachers Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Those Subjects to Students
- Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning
- Teachers Think Systematically about Their Practice and Learn from Experience

Required Texts

Mertler, C. A. (2020). Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators, 6th Ed. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

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

Recommended Books:

American Psychological Association (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

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 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, Tk20, hard copy).

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.

Assignments and/or Examinations

Assignment	Due Date	Percentage
Informed Participation	Ongoing	30%
Action Plan Outline Checklist	2/12	10%
Literature Review	2/19, 3/18	15%
Data Collection Plan & Action Research Timeline	3/4	10%
Action Research Presentation	4/29	30%
Inquiry/Action Research Project	5/8	5%
TOTAL		100%

More detailed descriptions of assignments and rubrics are shown at the end of the syllabus.

Other Requirements

Online Participation/Attendance Policy

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 points deduction 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.

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 two or more days for online/face-to-face sessions will result in automatic course failure.

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.*

Course Withdrawal with Dean Approval

For graduate and non-degree students, withdrawal after the last day for dropping a course requires approval by the student's academic dean, and is permitted only for nonacademic reasons that prevent course completion (Mason catalog). *Students must contact an academic advisor in APTDIE to withdraw after the deadline.* There is no guarantee that such withdrawals will be permitted.

Incomplete (IN)

This grade may be given to students who are in good standing, 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 9th week. Unless an explicit written extension is filed with the Registrar's Office by the faculty deadline, the grade of IN is changed by the registrar to an F (Mason catalog). 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. The faculty member does not need to allow up to the following semester for the student to complete the course. A copy of the contract will be kept on file in the APTDIE office.

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/>.

Grading

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*	<70	0.00	

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

See the University Catalog for details: <http://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/academic/grading/>

Professional Dispositions

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

Honor Code & Integrity of Work

- **Integrity of Work:** TCLDEL students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code (<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>). 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/>

DESCRIPTIONS OF ASSIGNMENTS/COURSE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

All assignments should be turned in on the due date indicated in the schedule below. All projects must be typed, in a legible 12-point font, with one-inch margins, and double-spaced. **All writing assignments should be submitted as Word documents, or a word processor-based format.** 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, except for in extraordinary circumstances.

Attendance and Informed Participation (30%)

Each week, you will engage in either in-class or online group discussions with your peers around the readings and/or learning activities/thinking exercises within each module. You are expected to participate in this discussion in a substantive way (by both responding directly to the prompt and by responding to others' comments). In online weeks, Discussion Board (DB) is particularly important as it provides a forum for in-depth discussion of the topics we will be exploring and an open space to work through your thoughts and ideas.

Please note, during online weeks, our discussion will be in the form of the electronic discussion board. It is not acceptable to wait until the end of the week to post your comments as you will not be able to engage fully in the discussion, and others will not have an opportunity to engage with your thoughts and comments. Each module will begin on a Thursday and run through the following Wednesday. You must start posting for each module by Saturday at noon (EST) so that the class will have Sunday through Wednesday to engage in conversation.

**Students will be expected to respond to each of the discussion prompts posted.

**Additionally, students should respond to at least three posts from other classmates.

Informed participation is a major part of your grade. As such, it includes other weekly activities *beyond* in-class and Discussion Board discussions.

You will receive a score on your participation in the discussion board conversation during **selected online modules** (instructor discretion). Rubric for DB activities will be posted in Blackboard.

Action Plan Outline Checklist (10%)

The requirements for this outline/checklist will be available on Blackboard. This outline will convey a clear plan for procedural stages of your Action Research Project.

Literature Review (15%)

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 a literature review (6-8 double-spaced pages, with at least 10 relevant scholarly sources—textbooks, books, and peer-reviewed journal articles).** Candidates will **read, critique, and synthesize** the literature from the field that is relevant to/informs their topic of inquiry. The literature review should present a synthesis of carefully selected research that is most relevant for providing a foundation for (informing) the action research project (e.g., research that is relevant to the question of focus, the teaching context/learners, the planned intervention/response, etc.).

You must approach this work thoughtfully in order to select readings that are highly relevant for their action research project. You will use the Mason Library Education databases to search for relevant research and are also welcome to use salient articles/book chapters from previous coursework.

Data Collection Plan & Action Research Timeline (10%)

A template for this plan will be posted on Blackboard. Your data collection plan will be driven by your research question(s) and the type of intervention/proposed solution or process that you will implement. You will also outline a timeline for implementation and data collection.

Inquiry/Action Research Project (30%) & Presentation (5%)

You will design and conduct an inquiry/action research project that is relevant to their present or future teaching positions. You will write a literature review, implement your action research, collect and analyze preliminary data, write the results of your project, and share with the instructor and your peers (and potentially with an outside audience). **Each candidate will write a final action research paper with all required sections.** A Final Action Research Paper Checklist will be uploaded in Blackboard and used to evaluate the final project. **The final action research 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 exceeds the expectations for that requirement—through superb quality--will an “A” level score be earned. With a mastery grading system, candidates 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, concise and clear, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Candidate completed all format and component guidelines in an exceptional way. Candidate supports assertions with multiple concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of insights/observations are exceptionally well explained.
- “B” level score = Candidate work is well organized, thorough and thoughtful, clear, and completed in a professional and timely manner. Candidate followed all format and component guidelines satisfactorily. Candidate supports assertions with sufficient concrete examples and/or explanations. Significance and/or implications of observations are satisfactorily 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

Class Session	Topic	Main Readings	Assignments Due
Week 1 (1/22)	Introduction to Action Research	* Mertler Ch.1 * Stribling article (online)	Self-Introduction Sheet
Week 2 (1/29)	Contextualizing Your Classroom for Action Research	* Mertler Ch.2	
Week 3 (2/5) online	Finding the Focus & Literature Review	* Mertler Ch. 3	Complete DB
Week 4 (2/12)	Addressing Ethical Issues	* Mertler Ch. 4 * Mills Ch. 2 (online) * Zeni (1998) (online)	Action Plan Outline Due
Week 5 (2/19) online	Writing Week for Literature Review	* Resources for literature review writing (online)	Complete DB; Work on your literature review
Week 6 (2/26) online	Action Research Planning – What is Your Intervention?	* Mertler Ch. 5	Complete DB; Literature Review 1 Due
Week 7 (3/4)	Action Research Planning – Data Collection Plan	* Sample action research papers/reports	Data Collection Plan Due
Week 8 (3/11)	<i>Mason Spring Break</i>		
Week 9 (3/18)	Implementing Your Action and Data Collecting and Analysis	* Mertler Ch. 6	Literature Review 2 Due
Week 10 (3/25) online	Implementing Your Action and Data Collecting and Analysis	* Mertler Ch. 7	Complete DB
Week 11 (4/1)	Writing an Action Research Report	* Mertler Ch. 8	
Week 12 (4/8) online	Dissemination and Reflection on Action Research	* Mertler Ch. 9	Final Paper Checklist B-G Draft and Peer Feedback Due
Week 13 (4/15)	<i>Individual Conferences as Needed</i>		
Week 14 (4/22) online	Revising and Refining Your Action Research Project	Work on your final action research paper; Share your preliminary results and peer feedback	Final Paper Checklist H Draft & Peer Feedback Due
Week 15 (4/29)	<i>Action Research Presentation</i>		Course Evaluation Forms; Materials Release Forms; Action Research Presentation Powerpoint
5/8	Action Research Paper Due By May 8, Friday 11:59 PM EST.		

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/>.

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 <https://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 <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices 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 <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Responsible Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1202. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of

Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

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