George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
FAST TRAIN IB Certificate Program

EDUC 626:
Inquiry Into Action – IB Teachers, Learners and Schools
3 Credits

Instructor: April Mattix, Ph. D.
Email: amattix@gmu.edu
Phone: (o) 703.993.4007
Skype: april.mattix
Office Hours: By appointment
Office: 2603 Thompson Hall
Meeting Dates: August 27 – November 4
Meeting Time: online
Meeting Location: online

Course Description: This course explores and utilizes the action research and qualitative research process to help educational practitioners plan and complete an action research study related to IB learners, teachers or schools. Furthermore, the course examines the social, cultural and ethical issues of conducting research with students.

Prerequisites: Admission to GSE, enrollment in FASTTRAIN IB certificate program and completion of EDUC 621: Teaching and Learning in the International Baccalaureate Programs, or permission of the instructor.

Nature of Course: This course is an online seminar and action research course. This means that our work together will primarily be through dialogue with each other. Instead of utilizing lectures, each class will depend on the ideas that we collectively develop as we engage in ongoing discussion about international education, the International Baccalaureate, and action research. Your own experiences as teachers, readers, writers, and learners, along with the course readings, will be an important part of our developing collective understandings.

It is vitally important for each student to complete readings and activities on a weekly basis. Typically, a course meets once weekly for approximately 2.5 hours. For each of

the 10 modules, you should spend this amount of time on Blackboard in addition to your weekly readings and work. Successful students in an online learning environment are proactive, self-regulated and manage their time well.

Learner Outcomes: This course is designed to enable students to:
1. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research studies within various paradigms, including action research, using measures of rigor;
2. Propose and complete an action research project that includes an overview, contextual statement, review of the literature, methodology, data analysis, conclusions, reflections and relationship to practice;
3. Make explicit links between theory and practice in their own action research;
4. Examine ethical considerations when conducting research with children including their own project;
5. Explain the critical importance of considering multiple perspectives using different approaches to inquiry; and,
6. Demonstrate leadership in conducting class discussions and presenting their action research projects to others.

Standards: The following standards will be addressed in this course:

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
Proposition 1: Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
Proposition 2: Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects.
Proposition 3: Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
Proposition 4: Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
Proposition 5: Teachers are members of learning communities
ASTL 6: Teachers attend to the needs of culturally, linguistically and cognitively diverse learners.
ASTL 7: Teachers are change agents, teacher leaders, and partners with colleagues and families.

IB Teacher Award Inquiry Strands
Area of Inquiry 2: Teaching and Learning
   f. What teaching strategies and learning activities support Program learning outcomes?
Area of Inquiry 4: Professional Learning:
   n. What is reflective practice and how does it support Program implementation and enhance practice?
   n. How are current standards and practices pertaining to the Program implemented?
   n. What are current innovations and ideas in the area of international education and how can these be applied to enhance the IB Program?
   n. What elements of the program authorization, evaluation and curriculum review process are implemented and how do these processes enhance IB Programs?
   o. What is the role of collaborative working practice in supporting the Program learning outcomes?

p. In what ways does IB promote communities of practice?

p. In what ways does the use of the ITC support building communities of practice?

p. In what ways can we engage across regional and international boundaries to collaborate on IB research initiatives?

p. In what ways can we share our findings and experiences to enhance the professional expertise of IB teachers, students and communities?

Technology (ISTE):
IV. Teachers apply technology to facilitate a variety of effective assessment and evaluation strategies.
V. Teachers use technology to enhance their productivity and professional practice.

Standards and Outcomes Matrix:

Outcomes	NBPTS/ASTL	IB	Technology
1	4	n o, p	
2	4	f, n o, p	IV
3	1, 2, 4	f, n o, p	
4	4, 6	n o, p	
5	1, 4, 6	f, n o, p	
6	5, 7	f, n o, p	V

Required Course Text:
Mills, G.E. (2014). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Person Education, Inc., Merrill Prentice Hall. ISBN: 978-0132887762.

Hendricks, C. (2012). *Improving schools through action research: A reflective practice approach* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc. ISBN: 978-0132868648

Technology Resources:
- All students are required to have access to a computer with Internet access and a current GMU email account.
- All students will be enrolled in the online Curriculum Center through the International Baccalaureate Organization.
- Relevant Websites:
    International Baccalaureate Organization – Online Curriculum Center (OCC)
        http://www.ibo.org/
    Practitioner Research as Staff Development:
        http://www.valrc.org/publications/research/index.html
    American Psychological Association
        http://www/apa.org

GMU Policies and Resources for Students:

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/].
- 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 George Mason University 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.
- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See http://caps.gmu.edu/].
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See http://ods.gmu.edu/].
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/].

Professional Dispositions

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

Core Values Commitment

- The College of Education & 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/**

Grading Scale for FAST TRAIN:

A+ = 100
A   = 94-99
A-   = 90-93
B+ = 85-89
B   = 80-84 (no B- grades)
C   = 70-79 – does not meet licensure requirements or Level I award recommendation
F   = Does not meet requirements of the Graduate School of Education

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 10th 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 FAST TRAIN office.

GMU E-mail & Web Policy: Mason uses electronic mail (**www.gmu.edu/email**) to provide official information to students. Examples include notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly (Mason catalog).

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 FAST TRAIN to withdraw after the deadline. There is no guarantee that such withdraws will be permitted.

Online Participation/Attendance Policy: Students are expected to participate in **all** online discussions. Not participating in an online discussion module will be reflected with a zero for the week and as an absence. **Students with more two or more absences will not receive credit for the course.**

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.

Performance Based Assessment (PBA): All courses in the Certificate Program in Advanced IB studies will have a required Performance Based Assessment (PBA). The required PBA for this course is the *Action Research Paper*. This assignment must be posted to Task Stream, where it will be reviewed and scored. Please see the FAST TRAIN website: http://fasttrain.gmu.edu/assets/docs/fast_train/IB-Archive.pdf for more guidelines about the PBA requirement.

TaskStream: Every student registered for any FAST TRAIN course with a required performance-based assessment (will be designated as such in the syllabus) is required to submit this assessment (The ACTION RESEARCH PAPER) to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a one-time course or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of your performance-based assessment will also be provided using TaskStream. Failure to submit the assessment to TaskStream will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade as Incomplete (IN). Unless this grade is changed upon completion of the required TaskStream submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following semester.

Course Requirements:

All assignments should be turned in on the due date indicated in the schedule below via Blackboard **except** for the final assignment, the Project Based Assessment (PBA). The PBA will be uploaded into **Task Stream.** The submission deadline for assignments is 11:59pm EST of the due date indicated for each assignment. All projects must be typed, in a legible 12-point font, with one-inch margins, double-spaced. 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. I am happy to clarify and lend assistance on projects and assignments, but please contact me within a reasonable timeframe.

1. **Blackboard Participation (20%)**

   Each week in our class we will have an online group discussion of the readings that are assigned for the week. 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). Your participation in discussion board conversations is **20%** of your final grade.

   Please note, as this is an online course, all 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 Tuesday and run through the following Monday. You must start posting for each module by *Friday at noon (EST)* so that the class will have Saturday through Monday 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.

2. Annotated Bibliography (15%)

Each student will create an annotated bibliography of a minimum of ten (10) resources related to the subject and context of the action research paper. Ideally, the ten resources utilized in the annotated bibliography will be resources used to help create the literature review and inform that theoretical basis of the paper. Further information regarding the annotated bibliography can be found on Blackboard.

3. Action Research Study

The action research study is comprised of three major components: 1) the action research plan of action, 2) the final action research paper, and 3) a multimedia presentation of the project.

A. **Action Research Plan of Action (10%)**

Students will submit an action research plan of 4-7 double spaced pages that includes the following components:
1) An area-of-focus statement
2) Develops a research question
3) Describes the intervention or innovations
4) Describes the membership of the action research group
5) Describes negotiations that need to be undertaken
6) Develops a timeline
7) Develops a statement of resources
8) Develops data collection ideas
Additional information will be provided on Blackboard.

B. **Final Action Research Paper (35%)**

Each student will write a research paper that includes the following sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, findings (with accompanying samples/examples), analysis and implications for practice, and reflections. Papers must follow current APA formatting guidelines. Additional information will be provided on Blackboard.

C. **Presentation of Action Research (20%)**

Each student will create a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation of his or her action research project. Like the paper, the presentation should include an introduction, summary of the literature, description of the methodology, findings, analysis and implications for practice, and reflections. The presentations will be uploaded by the instructor into a shared folder on Blackboard so that all participants in the class can view the presentations. Additional information will be provided on Blackboard.

Assignments, Grading, and Due Dates:

Assignment	Percent of Final Grade	Outcomes Addressed	Due Date
Discussion Board/ Assignments	20	1, 3, 4, 6	Weekly
Annotated Bibliography	15	1, 3, 5	October 7
Plan of Action	10	2, 3, 4	September 16
Action Research Paper*	35	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	November 1
Presentation of Action Research	20	5, 6	November 2

*Designated Performance Based Assessment