

George Mason University  
College of Education & Human Development — Graduate School of Education

**EDRD 635, “School-Based Inquiry in Literacy”**

Summer 2010 (Fairfax 2009 Cohort)

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Class meetings

Mondays, 4:30-8:30 p.m., Krug Hall 3. May 17 – July 12 (July 19 final paper is due)

Course Overview

**Course Description:** Capstone course in literacy emphasis, focusing on research-based inquiry related to literacy in school settings. Includes review of literature and teacher inquiry project.

Prerequisites: EDRD 630, 631, 632, 633, 637, and 634; admission to literacy emphasis; or permission of program coordinator.

IRA/NCATE competencies addressed in this course

- IRA 1.2 Demonstrate knowledge of reading research and histories of reading
- IRA 5.2 Continue to pursue the development of professional knowledge and dispositions
- IRA 5.4 Participate in, initiate, implement, and evaluate professional development programs

Virginia State Standards (2007) addressed in this course:

- 6i. Demonstrate effective communication skills in working with a variety of groups, including parents, teachers, administrators, community leaders, etc.
- 6j. Demonstrate knowledge of current research and exemplary practices in English/reading.

General Requirements

Readings and participation

The completion of all readings assigned for the course is assumed. Because the class will be structured around discussion and small group activities pertaining to school inquiry in literacy, it is important to keep up with the readings and to participate in class. It is your responsibility to come to class with 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. Class participation will influence your grade.

Class attendance

If, due to an emergency, you will not be in class, please contact me prior to class time; it's best to do so via email ([esturtev@gmu.edu](mailto:esturtev@gmu.edu)). You are expected to email assignments to me regardless of your class attendance on the day that the assignment is due. Students are responsible for obtaining information given during class discussions despite attendance. Attendance will influence your grade.

All assignments should be turned in on the due date indicated in the schedule below via both paper copy (in class) and email attachment (by midnight, whether or not you are in class that evening). All projects

must be typed, in 12-point font, with one inch margins, double-spaced, in Times New Roman font. 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.

#### Taskstream Artifacts

- Your final **teacher research project** is the performance-based assessment for this course; it is required that you upload this project to the Taskstream website at the end of the course.
- Your **Virginia Reading Assessment** score is also a required portfolio artifact that you will upload to the Taskstream system. The ASTL/Literacy program advises you to take the VRA sometime between the end of EDRD 633 and the end of EDRD 635; information on the VRA can be found at <http://www.va.nesinc.com/>. You are required to take the VRA in order to complete the reading specialist program at Mason. All ASTL/Literacy program students must submit a VRA score before receiving credit for EDRD 635.

#### GSE Syllabus Statements of Expectations

The Graduate School of Education (GSE) expects that all students abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See <http://www.gse.gmu.edu> for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code. See [http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC\\_H12](http://www.gmu.edu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12) for the full honor code.
- Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Resource Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester. See [www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc) or call 703-993-2474 to access the DRC.

#### Required Texts

Mills, G. E. (2011). Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher, fourth edition. Boston: Pearson. ISBN-10: 0-13-704952-8

Numerous articles will be used in class and for individual research papers. These will be available electronically or through library resources.

Assignments

A. Class participation/reading assignments. Participate actively in all classes. Complete all reading before class and bring notes/questions for discussion.	10
B. Article critique -- select a research article, write a 2 page critique of the article, and share with class informally. Topics should be linked your literacy research focus. Specific instructions will be provided on the first class.	10
C. Staff development project: Implement either a study group or a workshop and write an analysis of the results (You may use the workshop plan developed in EDRD 634). Write an analysis of what you learned. Further instructions will be provided.	20
D. Attend a reading-related conference and write a summary of what you learned. Discuss whether you would like to present at this conference in the future and why. The conference cannot take place in your own school, and must be at least a half day.	10
E. Teacher research project: Write a literature review and proposal for teacher research, collect and analyze pilot data, and share with others in a PowerPoint presentation. [You are also encouraged to complete the research and apply to participate in the Teacher Research conference in April 2011 ( <a href="http://www.gwrc.net">www.gwrc.net</a> )] or the VSRA conference in spring 2011 ( <a href="http://www.vsra.net">www.vsra.net</a> ). You will receive an outline for this project as well as due dates for various components.	50* (must post to task stream by last class). Grade will be Incomplete until project is posted.
F. Virginia Reading Assessment. (See note on earlier page of syllabus).	Program requirement (no points). Post your score report to Taskstream by end of course. Grade will be Incomplete until score is posted.

## Grading Scale

- A+ = 99-100%  
 A = 94%-98%  
 A- = 90%-93%  
 B+ = 88%-89%  
 B = 80%-87%  
 C = 75%-79%

### Graduation and Licensure

- Meet with GMU Licensure Specialist Joanna Bosik ([jbosik@gmu.edu](mailto:jbosik@gmu.edu)). If you have finished your master's degree, apply for your license immediately after you have completed the literacy coursework. If you wait until the following term you may have to pay a fee to re-activate your file. You must apply for your license via Mason or your school district; you cannot apply for your license as an individual.
- Review the GMU Registrar guidelines for graduation. You must file an "Intent to Graduate" form several months prior to the end of your certificate or master's program. Note: Do NOT file for the certificate if you are going on for the master's degree. See <http://registrar.gmu.edu/gif/index.html> for more information. Students may apply for January and May graduation at the beginning of our fall semester.

### Suggested Resources

#### GMU Library

<http://library.gmu.edu/>

#### Articles

- Cochran-Smith, M., Lytle, S. L. (1999). The teacher research movement: A decade later. *Educational Researcher*, 28(7), 15-25.
- Compton-Lilly, C. (2009). Listening to Families over Time: Seven Lessons Learned about Literacy in Families. *Language Arts*, 86(6), 449-457. Retrieved May 16, 2010, from Research Library Core. (Document ID: 1781173651).
- Richardson, L. (1998). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (volume 2). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Rogers, R., et al. (2005). Professional development for social transformation: The literacy for social justice research group. *Language Arts*, 82(5), 347-358.

#### 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.
- Burnaford, G., Fischer, F. & Hobson, D. (1996). *Teachers doing research: Practical possibilities*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- 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.
- 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.
- IRA. (2004). *Preparing reading professionals: A collection from the International Reading Association*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- 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.
- Mills, G. (2000). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Nieto, S. (2003). *What keeps teachers going?* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sagor, R. (1993). *How to conduct collaborative action research*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Seidman, I. (1998). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences. New York: Teachers College Press.

Toll, C. (2005). The literacy coach's survival guide: Essential questions and practical answers. International Reading Association: [www.reading.org/publications/bbv/books/bk565/](http://www.reading.org/publications/bbv/books/bk565/)

#### Teacher 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)

#### Professional Organizations

1. Greater Washington Reading Council: [www.gwrc.net](http://www.gwrc.net)
2. Virginia State Reading Association: [www.vsra.org](http://www.vsra.org)
3. International Reading Association (IRA) (organization for educators/ and researchers) [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)
4. National Reading Conference (NRC) (an international literacy research organization): [www.nrconline.org](http://www.nrconline.org)
5. National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE): [www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)

**Schedule (as of May 17)**

Date/Class	Topic	Reading due/Assignment due
May 17/Class 1	Intro to Course Understanding types of research Writing a critique (handout)	In class reading/analysis of research article
May 24/Class 2	Understanding action research Ethics of research Deciding on a RQ	Chapters 1&2
May 27/(Thurs) Class 3	Teacher Researcher Conference	XX
May 31 (no class- Memorial Day)		XX
June 7/ Class 4	Focusing your study; data collection techniques	Chapters 3, 4 Register for VRA by June 11 if you have not already taken it (Test is July 10). <a href="http://www.va.nesinc.com">www.va.nesinc.com</a> <b>Draft of RQ and preliminary outline of research paper.</b>
June 14/Class 5	Validity, Reliability, Generalizability  Interpreting your data	Chapter 5, 6 <b>Article critique due</b> – must be a research study – use the format provided (2 page limit/single spaced).
June 21/Class 6	Action Planning Creating a chart related to your literature review. Writing up your Research	Chapters 7, 8 <b>List of references due</b> - bring copies of 5 key references to class (just for your own use).
June 28/Class 7	Evaluating Action Research Workshop on data analysis – bring your data to class. Creating a visual for your data (see appendix C)	Chapter 9 Bring data to class Bring computer (if possible) to class.
July 5/ Class 8	Presentations on projects	<b>Conference report and Workshop reports</b> are due.
July 12/Class 9	Presentations on projects	
July 19/Class 10 (individual meetings as needed)	<b>Research papers due</b>	Post to task stream. Also post VRA score to Task stream.

Literacy Program Area (Advanced Master's/Doctoral)  
Writing a Critique of a Research Study

An important skill of an educator is the ability to read and interpret research reports. One way to develop this skill is to write a critique of a research study.

A critique should be brief (1000 words – about 2 pages, single spaced with spaces between paragraphs-- place the reference in APA format at the top of the first page)

Critiques should include the following sections (with subheadings):

- Purpose
- Method
- Results
- Conclusions
- Critical comments

*Purpose* refers to the purpose of the study (Why was this study conducted?). This is often stated explicitly by the author. You may quote the purpose statement using APA format (make sure to include the page number).

*Method* refers to how the study was conducted. In this section you should briefly describe what was done in the study. The following questions cover some of the information that is important.

- (For quantitative studies) What variables were studied? How was each variable measured?
- (For qualitative studies) What questions were studied? What methods of data collection were used?
- What was the size of the sample/who were the participants? How were the participants or sample selected? What are the demographics/characteristics of the sample/participants?
- How long did the investigation last?
- How were the data analyzed? (You may quote here as well – especially if the methodology is new to you).

In the *Results* section, briefly describe what was found in the study and the conclusions the investigator drew from the findings.

The last section, *Critical Comments*, is very important. In this section, you have the opportunity to comment on the value of the research as conceptualized, conducted, and reported and on the practical value of the research for teachers, students, and schools. Though both strengths and weaknesses are included in this section, it is not appropriate to discuss only the strengths of a study. Every study has some weaknesses. Look for them as you read the study and describe them in your critique.

In writing your critical comments, think about the following issues: 1) new conceptual contributions of the study; 2) new methodological contributions of the study; 3) validity of the study; 4) research design, 5) the adequacy of the written report and suggestions for improvement, 6) suggestions for future research directions and effort.

After you have written your critique, go back and edit vigorously – remember you can have only 1000 words (about 2 pages). Often you can omit words and make your meaning more (rather than less) clear. As Mark Twain reportedly stated, “If I had more time I would have made it shorter.” (Take time!) ☺