College of Education and Human Development
Graduate School of Education

EDLE 690 602
Using Research to Lead School Improvement

Th. 5:00-8:00p
Oakton High School
Fall 2012

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Phone: 703.993.5596   appointment

Course Description: EDLE 690 Using Research to Lead School Improvement (3:3:0)

Develops skills, insights, and understanding of how leaders use research to improve schools, with emphasis on the use of assessment and research data to identify school improvement needs and to design school improvement projects.

Nature of Course Delivery

Using Research to Lead School Improvement helps students to identify opportunities to improve student achievement and focus their efforts to change and restructure schools. Through lectures, workshops, discussions, case studies, and presentations, students will learn how to conduct library and field-based research, how to bridge theory and research to practice, and how to design school improvement based on sound theory and research.

Content
The two primary purposes of the course are to help students learn how to engage in action research and how to use published research to lead school improvement focused on instruction. All of the EDLE program goals are active, to a greater or lesser extent, in this course. Candidates will begin to:

1. develop the capacity to examine and summarize student performance data and use these data to identify school needs;
2. develop an informed perspective on issues in education administration that is grounded in contemporary research;
3. understand how principals can use research to enhance instructional leadership; and

4. be able to apply technology to the task of reviewing, conducting, and/or presenting education research.

Teaching and Learning

Each class will include a variety of activities and exercises. Out-of-class work will rely in part on the use of TaskStream, and on the use of web-based resources created to complement the primary text. Specific process goals for the class are as follows:

1. Classes will reflect a balance of activities that encourage the exploration of the use of research in instructional leadership. To promote an atmosphere that allows us to accomplish this, we will:
   a. Start and end on time;
   b. Maintain (flexibly) a written agenda reflecting objectives for each class;
   c. Agree to disagree respectfully during class discussions;
   d. Strive to be open to new ideas and perspectives; and
   e. Listen actively to one another.

2. Student work will reflect what is expected from leaders, including the skills and motivation to:
   a. write papers that are well researched, proofread, submitted in a timely fashion, and conform to APA guidelines;
   b. participate actively in class discussions in a manner that challenges the best thinking of the class; and
   c. provide constructive feedback to others both on their ideas and on their written work, striving to learn from each other and to test each other's ideas.

3. We will endeavor to create a classroom climate that approximates what we know about learning organizations. Consequently, it is important that we create a space that allows participants to try out new ideas and voice opinions without fear of ridicule or embarrassment. The hallmark of a learning organization is a balance between openness and constructive feedback; hence, everyone is expected to:
   a. come fully prepared to each class;
   b. demonstrate appropriate respect for one another;
   c. voice concerns and opinions about class process openly;
   d. engage in genuine inquiry;
   e. recognize and celebrate each other's ideas and accomplishments;
   f. show an awareness of each other's needs; and
   g. **maintain strict confidentiality** regarding any information shared in the classroom.

Course Objectives

Students taking this course will:

1. Understand and apply planning, assessment, and instructional leadership that builds collective professional capacity
2. Understand and apply systems and organization theory
3. Understand and apply management and leadership skills that achieve effective and efficient organizational operations

4. Understand and apply basic leadership theories and knowledge that impact schools

Learner Outcomes
Successful students will emerge from the course with the ability to:
1. Gather and analyze student achievement data available from their school, school district, and the state;
2. search online databases for recent publications relevant to a specific topic, and prepare a brief summary of applied research on a topic relevant to the improvement of instruction at their school site;
3. use education research to develop a position based on more than one's opinion;
4. understand basic statistics (e.g., measures of central tendency & dispersion; basic inferential statistics) and their application in educational research;
5. understand and be able to evaluate basic research designs, and apply a research design to the study of a problem related to instruction and/or improvement at their school site; and
6. prepare and defend a proposal for a School Improvement Project (SIP) that becomes the blueprint for the capstone project required in the EDLE program internship.

National Standards and Virginia Competencies

The following ELCC standards are addressed in this course:

ELCC Standard 1.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a school or district vision of learning supported by the school community.
1.2 Articulate a Vision
1.3 Implement a Vision
1.4 Steward a Vision

ELCC Standard 2.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by promoting a positive school culture, providing an effective instructional program, applying best practice to student learning, and designing comprehensive professional growth plans for staff.
2.3 Apply Best Practice to Student Learning

ELCC Standard 3.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by managing the organization, operations, and resources in a way that promotes a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
3.1 Manage the Organization
3.2 Manage Operations
3.3 Manage Resources

ELCC Standard 4.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by collaborating with families

and other community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

4.2 Respond to Community Interests and Needs

ELCC Standard 6.0: Candidates who complete the program are educational leaders who have the knowledge and ability to promote the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

6.1. Understand the Larger Context

This course addresses the following **VDOE Competencies**:

a. Knowledge understanding, and application of planning, assessment, and instructional leadership that builds collective professional capacity, including:
   (2) Collaborative leadership in gathering and analyzing data to identify needs to develop and implement a school improvement plan that results in increased student learning;
   (7) Identification, analysis, and resolution of problems using effective problem-solving techniques; and
   (8) Communication of a clear vision of excellence, linked to mission and core beliefs that promotes continuous improvement consistent with the goals of the school division.

b. Knowledge, understanding and application of systems and organizations, including:
   (1) Systems theory and the change process of systems, organizations and individuals, using appropriate and effective adult learning models;
   (2) Aligning organizational practice, division mission, and core beliefs for developing and implementing strategic plans;
   (3) Information sources and processing, including data collection and data analysis strategies;
   (4) Using data as a part of ongoing program evaluation to inform and lead change;

   (5) Developing a change management strategy for improved student outcomes; and
   (6) Developing empowerment strategies to create personalized learning environments for diverse schools.

c. Knowledge understanding and application of management and leadership skills that achieve effective and efficient organizational operations, including:
   (8) Application of data-driven decision making to initiate and continue improvement in school and classroom practices and student achievement.

f. Knowledge understanding and application of basic leadership theories and influences that impact schools including:
   (1) Concepts of leadership including systems theory, change theory, learning organizations and current leadership theory.

Relationship of Course to Internship

Although the internship is a separate course, the Education Leadership program has integrated internship-related activities into course work. During this course, students will prepare and

present a proposal for a school improvement project that they will implement and evaluate as a part of their internship activities over the remainder of the program.

Course Materials

Required Readings

Bauer, S.C. & Brazer, S.D. (2012). *Using research to lead school improvement: Turning evidence into action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Outside-of-Class Resources

Online access is vital for the distance learning aspects of the course and is important if we experience problems with the classroom facility. **All students are required to activate and monitor their GMU e-mail accounts**. If you are uncertain about how to do this, please see me. I **strongly recommend** that you do not forward your Mason e-mail to a different account because attachments are often lost that way. It is best to check e-mail directly from your Mason account daily.

All students are required to use http://www.taskstream.com as part of this course. This is an Internet site at which I will post vital information for the course and through which we will communicate from time to time. Samples of student work will be archived on this site for purposes of course, program, and college assessment.

Course Requirements, Performance-based Assessment, and Evaluation Criteria

Attendance
All students are expected to attend every class on time and to remain in class until it ends. If you are ill or have an emergency that prevents you from attending class, please call or e-mail me in advance. If you miss more than one class, you arrive late to multiple classes, and/or you leave class early multiple times, you will lose participation points.

General Expectations
Consistent with expectations of a master's level course in the Education Leadership program, grading is based heavily on student performance on written assignments. The assignments constructed for this course reflect a mix of skills associated with the application of research to education leadership contexts. Overall, written work will be assessed using the following broad criteria:

1. Application of concepts reflected in class discussion and readings
2. The quality of analysis, synthesis, and application
3. The ability to write in a clear, concise, and organized fashion

Additionally, a portion of the class grade will be based on participation and the contribution you make to class discussions. The overall weights of the various performances are as follows:

Class participation 10 points

Students are expected to participate actively in class discussions, in group activities, and in serving as critical friends to other students. Arriving at class more than 30 minutes late or leaving more than 30 minutes before the end of class may result in loss of points. Your participation in large and small group discussions, workshops, on-line sessions, and the poster session will comprise your grade.

Written assignments 90 points

Several different types of performance-based assignments will be completed during the semester. Each assignment relates to the application of educational research in your school setting. <u>A description of each assignment and a rubric for grading each assignment are included at the end of this syllabus</u>.

The assignments are designed sequentially to help you define and plan the school improvement project **you will be conducting as your capstone project for the internship**. Thus, in the first assignment, you examine school performance data and define a research topic. In the second and third, you review the available research literature on that topic and begin to define the specific improvement project you will implement. Finally, for the fourth assignment, you write and defend your proposal. The written proposal is the <u>program-level Performance-Based Assessment for this course</u>.

<u>Submitting papers</u>: All papers must be submitted **on time**, electronically via TaskStream. I will provide assessments of your work and specific feedback on your papers via TaskStream. TaskStream will be set up to allow submission of any given assignment only up until 12:00 midnight on the date it is due.

<u>Late work:</u> I expect all students to submit their work on time, meaning no later than by midnight of the due date, unless other arrangements have been made in advance of the deadline.

Grading Scale

A+	=	100 percent
A	=	95 – 99 percent
A-	=	90 – 94 percent
B+	=	86 – 89 percent
B	=	83 – 85 percent
B-	=	80 – 82 percent
C	=	75 – 79 percent
F	=	74 percent or below

George Mason University Policies and Resources for Students

    a. Academic integrity (honor code, plagiarism) – Students must adhere to guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/].

    b. Mason Email – 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, division, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301ge.html].

    c. Counseling and Psychological Services – 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/].

    d. Office of Disability Services – 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 http://ods.gmu.edu/].

    e. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

    f. The Writing Center (Optional Resource) – 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/].

    g. University Libraries (Optional Resource) – The George Mason University Libraries provide numerous services, research tools, and help with using the library resources [See http://library.gmu.edu/].

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.

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

Weekly Schedule (Subject to Change)

Session	Topics	Reading/Writing Assignment
Th. Sept. 9	• Course introduction	
Th. Sept. 13	• Considering leadership and school improvement • Workshop: Analyzing your school context	**Please bring a copy of your school's School Improvement Plan to class** Bauer & Brazer [hereafter B&B] chp. 1&2
Th. Sept. 20	• Workshop: finding & reading data • Telling a story with numbers	**Please bring your laptop to class for online searching** B&B chp. 4&5
Th. Sept. 27	• No EDLE 690 class; EDLE 791 instead	**Please use this week to write a draft of your ITP**
Th. Oct. 4	• Workshop: ITP • Root cause analysis • Workshop: Research strategies for finding articles	**Please bring a draft (hard-copy) of your ITP for peer editing** **Please bring laptops for online searching** B&B chp. 6&7
Sat. Oct. 6	*Improvement Target Proposal Due - Midnight*	
Th. Oct. 11	• Forming a Collaborative • Summarizing and Interpreting Research: Annotated Bibliography • Workshop: Sharing findings	B&B, chp. 3&8
Th. Oct. 18	• **No Class: EDLE Conference**	**Please use this week to write your annotated bibliography**
Sat. Oct. 20	*Annotated Bibliography Due - Midnight*	
Th. Oct. 25	• No EDLE 690 class; EDLE 791 instead	**Please use this week to begin drafting your research brief**
Th. Nov. 1	• Collaborative Teams Workshop • Applying research to your school context	B&B, chp. 9

Th. Nov. 8	• Workshop: Research Brief	**Please bring a draft (hard-copy) of your Research Brief for peer editing**
Sat. Nov. 10	*Research Brief Due - Midnight*	
Th. Nov. 15	• On-Line Class Session • Linking root causes to solutions • Enacting a plan and defining success • Identifying the elements of a successful School Improvement Project	B&B, chp. 10
Th. Nov. 22	**No Class: Thanksgiving Break** **Happy Holidays!**	
Th. Nov. 29	• No EDLE 690 class; EDLE 791 instead	**Please use this week to write a draft of your SIP**
Th. Dec. 6	• Workshop: School Improvement Plan	**Please bring a draft of your SIP for peer editing** B & B chs. 9 & 10 and Epilogue
Th. Dec. 13	• Poster Session: Sharing plans and offering critical feedback	**Please bring a poster that outlines the key elements of your SIP**
Sat. Dec. 16	*School Improvement Plan Due - Midnight*	

Writing Assignment 1: Improvement Target Proposal (20 Points)
Due: Saturday October 6, 2012 (midnight)

Overview:
Data are tools—they represent a primary source of knowledge-building for school improvement. As leaders in your school, one of your primary tasks is to understand available data relating to your school's performance in meeting its goals and objectives. Additionally, you need to learn how to communicate about these data to various stakeholder groups. In this assignment, you are asked to assemble some of these data, and prepare a short summary suitable for presentation to a school leadership team.

Tasks:
1. Identify the variety of published data relating to your school's demographic characteristics (e.g., enrollment, attendance, composition of the student body, staffing); measures of student learning; and any perceptual data that might exist relating to such things as school climate. These data may be available on your school or school system's website, on related websites (e.g., state education department), or in published material.
2. Determine your school's primary performance objectives: What is the school expected to achieve? Dig deeper than routine accountability requirements; examine the school's current improvement plan, for instance, to identify current improvement priorities.
3. Examine relevant assessment data for at least a two-year period. To do this, you will need to **triangulate the data** available to you – look across various sources to answer the question: **How well are we doing?** As a leader in your school, you will add value to your analysis by using your craft knowledge to interpret what these data mean. You may limit your focus to one or more areas identified as priorities for your school (in other words, you do not need to present data on each and every curricular objective, but you should provide a reasonable synopsis of "how well we're doing.")
4. Identify any areas that reflect priorities—for instance, areas in which students are achieving at a level below your school's goals and objectives. Be careful to identify performance indicators that clearly relate to the school performance objective(s) you've identified. The goal here is NOT to "solve" an identified problem, but to highlight areas that are in continued need of attention in your school's improvement plan.
5. Prepare an Improvement Target Proposal that includes a synopsis of the school's demographic characteristics, improvement goals, current levels of performance, and challenge area(s). **Use tables and/or graphs to display your data clearly.** Use the attached rubric as a guide to structure your paper.

This is an exercise in leadership communication. Be selective—you cannot provide an overview of all of the data that might be available. Craft your examination to focus on important areas of concern. NOTE—the tone of the paper is persuasive: you are providing your expert judgment based on your analysis of school performance data, and in the end you are lobbying your school's leadership team to adopt the focus you identified as important.

Direct the paper to your school's leadership team as the audience—the team may include new members, including one or more parents or community members. Avoid jargon, and be aware of the clarity of your presentation—if you confuse your audience or present a lot of disparate data

that don't connect to your school's objectives, you've failed to add value to the discussion. <u>Use tables or graphs</u> sensibly to summarize briefly the discussion and direct the reader's attention.

This is a short paper (7 +/- pages), and should be written in a fashion that is suitable for the audience described above.

Improvement Target Proposal Assessment Rubric (20 points)

Levels: Criteria:	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaching Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Introduction and Thesis (10%) Any written statement should begin with an introduction that draws the reader into the topic and includes a one-sentence thesis. The thesis states what the author intends to prove or demonstrate in the body of the written work. For this paper, the thesis must name the focal area(s) for improvement.	The paper starts with an introduction that provides a clear roadmap for the reader, foreshadowing what the Improvement Target Proposal is intended to provide in the way of information. The thesis appears as the last sentence of the introductory paragraph.	The paper starts with a brief introduction that alludes to the purpose of the paper and provides a general foreshadowing of what is to be included in the document. The thesis may not be entirely clear or appropriate.	The introduction provides only the barest hint about the purpose of the paper and the information to be shared. The thesis is either confusing or missing.	The paper lacks an introduction entirely, or the introduction fails to provide useful information that is linked to the intended purpose of the document.
Characteristics of the school and diversity of the school community (ELCC 4.2) (25%) This section is intended to help the reader understand the nature of the school so that the priority area will make sense.	The paper includes a thorough and concise overview of the demographic characteristics of the school, school staffing, and the school community. The school's current improvement objectives are highlighted, and (if available) data related to characteristics of the school climate are described.	The paper includes a general overview of the demographic characteristics of the school, school staffing, and school community; the school's current improvement objectives; and measures of school climate. Some important demographic data are not evident.	The paper includes a limited review of demographic and staffing data, the school's current improvement objectives, and measures of school climate. Important data are omitted or inaccurately presented.	The presentation of demographic data is missing or wholly inadequate.
Use of data to analyze school performance related to the school's vision and objectives (ELCC 1.2) (25%) This section explains where the school has been in terms of student achievement.	The paper includes a clear and concise summary of the school's performance based on an assessment of important educational outcomes reflecting the school's vision and objectives, over at least a two-year period.	The paper includes a summary of the school's performance over a two-year period, using general measures of important educational outcomes.	The paper includes a summary of the school's current performance in general terms. Specific indicators or educational outcomes are unclear or missing.	The assessment of school performance is missing or wholly inadequate.
Identification of improvement area (ELCC 2.2) (20%) This is the "punchline" of the paper in which you explain exactly where the school ought to be focused in its effort to	The paper concludes with a recommendation of one or more focal areas to improve instruction. The identified achievement gap(s) are well supported by the analysis of school data, and are clearly	The paper concludes with a recommendation of one or more focal areas to improve instruction. The identified achievement gap(s) are generally	The paper concludes with a general recommendation of one or more focal areas to improve instruction. The identified achievement gap(s)	The recommendation is missing or wholly inadequate.

improve student achievement.	connected to the school's vision, improvement objectives, and the emerging needs of the school community.	supported by the analysis of school data, and are at least loosely connected to the school's vision and improvement objectives.	are not clearly supported by the analysis of school data.	
Use of tables and graphs to summarize data (10%) Tables and/or graphs should appear as support to the text. Data should be organized for ease of understanding.	Tables and/or graphics are powerfully used to present demographic and/or school performance data.	Tables and/or graphics are used sparingly, but effectively, to present demographic and/or school performance data.	Tables and/or graphics are used somewhat effectively, but in some instances they are distracting, mislabeled, or otherwise confusing.	Tables and/or graphics are not evident.
Mechanics and APA (10%) Your written work should always represent you as accurate and precise.	The paper is nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding and thorough proofreading .	There are occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice.	Errors in grammar and punctuation are present, but spelling has been proofread	There are frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Writing Assignment 2: Annotated Bibliography (10 Points)
Due: Saturday October 20, 2012 (midnight)

Overview: As emerging leaders in your schools, you need to develop the skills associated with accessing the knowledge base on questions that are important to the understanding and improvement of teaching and learning. An annotated bibliography provides you with the opportunity to learn how to sift through existing research on a question that interests you and to begin to organize the knowledge that you are gaining by reading this literature.

Tasks:
1. Use the problem, challenge, or gap you identified in the previous writing assignment. With this focus, articulate a research or guiding question. For example, "Why do second language learners experience disproportionately low achievement in mathematics?" That might be a bit broad, so your research problem or question is likely to narrow as you read relevant literature.
2. Find a number of <u>research articles</u> (theoretical works, empirical studies, and syntheses) that speak to the question you selected. This is an iterative process; as you examine the literature, you will narrow your search by stating (and restating) the research question that defines what you want to know and why. You might identify several articles that are review pieces or syntheses of the literature themselves, but you should also concentrate on identifying primary research (i.e., papers that present an analysis using quantitative or qualitative methods to contribute to the knowledge base on the question). Most of your research can be accomplished on the Internet, with support from your school library, the public library, and/or GMU libraries.
3. Prepare an ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY using <u>at least five (5)</u> of the most important papers you found. An annotated bibliography is a list of articles (or books) that includes a <u>brief description of the work</u> and <u>an evaluation of its usefulness</u>. The purpose of an annotated bibliography is to provide information about the relevance, utility, and quality of the source **for your purposes**.
4. Your annotated bibliography should include a statement of the topic and research question you are investigating; five or more annotated entries using the format provided in class; and <u>a complete reference list</u> showing all of the papers you consulted (somewhere in the neighborhood of 10). Citations must be in APA format.

Annotated Bibliography Assessment Rubric

Levels: Criteria:	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaching Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Statement of problem: (ELCC 1.2) (10%) A clear statement of the problem helps to guide the reader.	The paper begins with a clear statement of the question or problem, which specifically relates to a performance gap identified using assessment results, demographic data, and analysis of school and community needs.	The paper begins with a statement of the question or problem which relates generally to a performance gap identified using assessment data.	The statement of the research question or problem is evident, but is vaguely worded or poorly spelled out. It is difficult to discern a clear focus for the research.	The statement of research question or problem is missing or wholly inadequate.
Bibliographic entries - content (ELCC 6.1) (40%) Articles read and reviewed should contain original research or useful reviews of research.	Annotated entries provide a clear and concise summary of each research source. Each entry includes an overview of the research (including method and findings); and an assessment of its utility.	Annotated entries provide a summary of each research source. Each entry includes a brief overview of the research and an assessment of its utility, but may be lacking in specificity.	Annotated entries provide a general overview of research sources, but lack detail or are missing significant elements needed to make the entries useful.	Annotated entries are severely lacking in detail, rendering them of little use.
Bibliographic entries – focus (10%) Articles read must focus on the research problem.	All entries clearly and specifically relate to the research question or problem.	Most entries relate clearly to the research question or problem.	Most entries relate only generally to the research question or problem.	The connection between annotated entries and the research question or problem is difficult to discern.
Bibliographic entries – quality (10%) Articles used must be worthwhile.	Sources are well balanced, including original research and synthesis pieces from high-quality, credible sources.	Entries are included from quality sources, but are dominated by synthesis pieces; original research is not evident.	One or more entries are included from questionable sources, reflecting largely opinion pieces rather than original research or syntheses of research.	Entries are dominated by material from questionable sources; a review of research is not evident.

Bibliographic entries -- quantity (10%)	Five or more annotated summaries are presented, along with a detailed reference list of at least 10 sources consulted. Bibliographic entries are complete and presented in APA format.	Five or more annotated summaries are presented, as is a reference list of at least 10 sources consulted. Bibliographic entries are presented in APA format. However, some references appear incorrect or are in improper format.	Fewer than five annotated summaries are presented, or the annotated entries and reference list contain numerous incorrect or incomplete references.	Annotated summaries and/or reference list are missing or wholly inadequate.
References (10%)	References are complete and presented in APA format.	References are in APA format, but a few (1-3) appear incorrect or contain minor formatting errors.	The document contains numerous incorrect or incomplete references.	References are omitted entirely.
Mechanics (10%)	The paper is nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding and thorough proofreading.	Occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice are present.	The paper contains errors in grammar and punctuation, but spelling has been proofread.	The paper contains frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Writing Assignment 3: Research Brief (20 Points)
Due: Saturday November 10, 2012 (midnight)

Overview: A research brief is a <u>literature review</u> or compilation of published work on a research topic that both summarizes and evaluates what is known on the topic. The main difference between a research brief and a formal literature review is the intended audience: address your research brief <u>to a practitioner audience</u> (e.g., your principal or school leadership team). Use your annotated bibliography and the papers you collected to write it to provide a synthesis of the knowledge base and to identify what is known, what is not known (gaps in the literature), and what is missing (unanswered questions) in the extant research.

Tasks:

1. Write an introductory paragraph that includes a clearly-worded, one-sentence <u>guiding question</u> that describes the purpose of your investigation. This should be a reformulation (if needed) or restatement of the question you framed for your annotated bibliography. Your introduction must also include a thesis that clearly states in one sentence the argument you are putting forward in the paper.
2. Using the research literature you collected to prepare your annotated bibliography, along with any additional sources you might identify, write a <u>review of the literature</u> that addresses the question and supports your thesis. The body of the document should summarize <u>and analyze</u> the existing research. Remember that this is <u>not simply a listing of the research cited</u> – your review adds value by organizing various studies, and identifying strengths and weaknesses of established work.
3. For purposes of this exercise (and the intended audience – your school's leadership team), conclude the paper with a section that briefly summarizes what is known and provides a <u>recommendation</u> based on the available research. For instance, if your question was, "Why do second language learners experience disproportionately low achievement in mathematics?" and the research focuses your attention on the need to teach mathematics vocabulary prior to introducing new concepts, you might recommend that your school's improvement team work toward an improvement objective that addresses the mathematics curriculum in this way. Be as persuasive as you can – this recommendation will connect to your School Improvement Project (SIP) proposal (the next writing assignment).

Your paper should be no more than eight (8) pages (excluding title page and references), and must include a reference list in APA format.

HINT: Your paper should be closely related to your Improvement Target Proposal, leading you to write your guiding question in a manner that suggests a potential course of action for your School Improvement Proposal. Remember, to get the most out of your efforts, you should use the literature and your own investigative work to identify likely ***root causes*** of the performance challenge and ways to reduce or eliminate these ***root causes***.

Research Brief Assessment Rubric

Levels: Criteria:	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaching Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Introduction: research problem, overview (15%) The introduction must be very clear about the direction and focus of the paper.	The paper starts with a clear and concise statement of the research question and an introduction that provides a clear thesis for the reader that lays out the author's main argument. The thesis should be related to the achievement problem, challenge or gap identified in your Instructional Target Proposal.	The paper starts with a brief introduction that alludes to the research question and provides a general thesis.	An introduction is provided that provides only the barest hint about the research question or the information to be shared.	The paper lacks an introduction entirely, or the introduction fails to provide useful information that is linked to the research question.
Body: Application of research to school improvement (ELCC 2.3) (40%) For the research to be meaningful, it must be directly related to a specific question and argument.	The body of the paper presents a systematically organized synthesis of research directly relating to the question and supporting the thesis. Analysis is provided that reflects an awareness of and judgment about the quality of published work.	The body of the paper provides a loosely organized synthesis and analysis of published work related to the research question and the thesis.	The body of the paper describes published work generally related to the research question, but provides a limited synthesis or analysis of published work.	The synthesis and analysis of published work is wholly missing or inadequate.
Conclusion and recommendation (ELCC 2.2) (20%) A conclusion should be both summative and analytical. Re-stating the thesis is an important vehicle for tying the paper together.	The paper concludes with a clear and concise summary of research directly related to the research question (including a re-statement of the thesis), and a recommendation and rationale advocating for a possible course of action that could effectively result in the desired improvement(s).	The paper concludes with a general summary of research related to the research question and the thesis. A recommendation advocating for a possible course of action that could effectively lead to desired improvement(s) is presented in general terms, but the rationale for the recommendation is not entirely persuasive.	The paper concludes with a general summary of research on the research question. A recommendation advocating for a possible course of action is not evident.	The conclusion is missing or wholly inadequate; the paper ends abruptly.

Quality of research support (ELCC 6.1) (15%) The best way to make a persuasive argument is with high quality research.	Research cited is well balanced, including original research and synthesis pieces from high-quality, credible sources.	Research is cited from quality sources, but lacks specificity or is not connected in a set of coherent arguments.	General supporting research evidence is referenced, but appears dominated by syntheses or opinion pieces, or material from questionable sources.	Few solid supporting ideas or evidence from research are included.
Organization of paper (5%)	The paper is powerfully organized and fully developed.	The paper includes a logical progression of ideas aided by clear transitions.	The paper includes most required elements, but lacks transitions.	The paper lacks a logical progression of ideas.
Mechanics (5%)	The paper is nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding and thorough proofreading.	Occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice are present.	Errors in grammar and punctuation are present, but spelling has been proofread.	Frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation are present.

Writing Assignment 4: SIP Proposal (40 points)
Due: Saturday December 16, 2012 (midnight)

Overview: School leaders are increasingly expected to engage in short-term action research projects to demonstrate the efficacy of school programs and practices. As a part of your internship, you will propose a School Improvement Project (SIP) that addresses a problem or "achievement gap" identified through research on your school. Your proposal will describe a specific improvement project that you will **design, implement**, and **evaluate** during your internship, and later analyze in one of your concluding courses. The expectation is that you will lead a team in implementation of this project.

Tasks:

1. OVERVIEW: The proposal should start with a concise and well thought out description of the achievement gap you have identified through your assessment of student performance and achievement data, followed by a clear **statement of purpose** that generally demonstrates how you intend to address the performance gap. After stating this purpose, include an **overview** of the project that provides a brief description of what you intend to do to implement your proposal.

2. RATIONALE: Include a concise and well thought out **rationale** that describes why it is important to address the performance gap you identified, and your espoused theory of action that suggests why taking the proposed action will lead to improvement in the targeted area. Be sure to describe how your SIP project connects to or reinforces your school's vision and objectives. Use the research literature to support your strategy for addressing the achievement gap you identified.

3. OUTCOMES: Provide a short description of the **specific outcomes** you are seeking by implementing your project. Be specific; identify the performance indicators you intend to track in order to measure the educational outcomes that are important in your improvement area.

4. INVOLVEMENT: The expectation is that you will be engaging members of your school community in designing and enacting your improvement project. Provide a short summary of who you involved in the creation of this proposal, and which stakeholders you envision involving in the enactment and assessment of the SIP. Describe how you plan to enlist their support and build your team, including means you will use to maintain effective communication throughout the project.

5. ACTION PLAN: The proposal must include a clear, step-by-step **action plan** that defines the objective of the project (i.e., restates your purpose as an action objective), and delineates each of the major tasks that need to be completed during the project; when each task will be completed; who is responsible for each task; the resources needed to complete each task; and specific "success signals" that serve as indicators of the completion of major steps in the project. Use worksheets 9. 1 – 9.4 to help you prepare your action plan.

6. BUDGET: Following the action plan, a clear, well thought out <u>budget summary</u> should be presented. This can be a short narrative presentation (you do not need budget codes, etc.) The narrative should include a synopsis of the funding needed to complete the project; a description of any existing resources that will be devoted to the project, and a discussion of how authority to use these resources has been (or will be) procured, (if necessary).

7. EVALUATION PLAN: Include a narrative explanation of how you plan to **evaluate your project**, which includes a) the specific indicators you will be examining to determine impact of the project on student performance or on the learning environment; b) a description of how and when you plan to collect data about these indicators, and c) a brief description of the analysis you plan to conduct to examine these data in order to ascertain the impact of the project on your intended outcomes.

8. CONSEQUENCE ANALYSIS: In closing, briefly discuss the advantages and the potential limitations of the project. In particular, conduct a **consequence analysis** to predict any issues that might arise during implementation, or any limitations you might face in terms of using the evaluation design to draw trustworthy inferences about the effectiveness of the project. If possible, include reference to issues raised in the literature.

NOTE: The proposal is not an essay, per se; it can be written using each of the sections listed above, and some information can be presented in bullets (e.g., a listing of outcomes measured) or in tables (e.g., the action plan). There is a fair amount of redundancy in this proposal – for instance, the description of the project should provide a brief narrative explanation that matches the project delineated in the action plan; the list of outcomes measured should relate to the evaluation plan (which describes how you will go about collecting these data and what you will look at to know if you were successful). Your audience for this proposal is your principal – imagine that you are presenting this document to him/her, and lobbying for adoption of this project (which you will lead).

Your research proposal should be no more than ten pages, and should include citations and a reference list in APA format.

SIP Proposal Assessment Rubric

Levels: Criteria:	Exceeds Expectations (4)	Meets Expectations (3)	Approaching Expectations (2)	Falls Below Expectations (1)
Statement of purpose and overview of project: Use of data to identify SIP topic that relates to and supports the school's vision and objectives (10%) (ELCC 1.2)	The proposal begins with a clear statement of purpose, which relates specifically to a performance gap identified using assessment results, demographic data, and analysis of school and community needs. A concise, but thorough description of the proposed project is provided that spells out the actions proposed to reduce the identified performance gap.	The proposal begins with a statement of purpose which relates generally to a performance gap identified using assessment data. A brief description of the proposed project is provided.	The statement of purpose and/or description of the project evident, but is vaguely worded or poorly spelled out. It is difficult to discern a clear focus of the project.	The statement of purpose and/or project description is missing or wholly inadequate
Rationale: Use of best practice research strategies to promote improvement (10%) (ELCC 2.3)	The proposal includes a concise and well supported rationale that describes the nature of the gap being addressed, why the problem is important, and how taking the proposed action is intended to lead to improvement. Specific, current research is presented in support of the strategy selected to address the identified performance gap	The proposal includes a rationale that describes the nature of the gap being addressed and why the problem is important to the attainment of the school's vision, but somewhat unclear about how taking the proposed action is intended to lead to improvement. Research supporting the general improvement strategy is referenced.	The proposal includes a rationale, but only generally connects the proposed action to the reduction of the identified performance gap. Research supporting the proposed action is weakly presented or not evident.	The rationale is weak or wholly inadequate. It is not clear how enacting the proposed project relates to reducing the identified performance gap.

Outcomes: Identification of specific outcomes that will be used to monitor and evaluate the project (10%) (ELCC 1.4)	Specific indicators are identified and described that will be used to monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of the project. Each indicator is demonstrably connected to either monitoring implementation fidelity of the project or reducing the identified performance gap.	Specific outcome indicators are identified and described that could be used to monitor and evaluate the impact of the project. Indicators used to monitor implementation fidelity are unclear.	The proposal makes general reference to the kinds of outcomes sought, but specific measurable indicators of implementation fidelity and/or project outcomes are not clearly identified.	The outcomes associated with the project are not specified, or outcomes that do not relate to the identified performance gap are proposed.
Involvement: Identification and formation of team to enact project (5%) (ELCC 1.3)	The proposal clearly describes which stakeholders will be involved in enactment, monitoring, and evaluation of the SIP. All stakeholders who are important to the success of the project are involved. Team member roles and responsibilities are outlined, as are means that will be used to maintain effective communication among team members.	The proposal describes the primary stakeholders who will be involved in enactment of the SIP. One or more groups whose involvement may be important are omitted. Attributes of team organization are described in general terms.	The proposal is unclear about stakeholders involvement in enactment of the SIP, or fails to mention groups who are obviously important to the success of the project. Attributes of team organization are referenced in general terms.	Stakeholder involvement in planning and/or implementation is not evident.
Action Plan: Development of action plan to guide the implementation of SIP (20%) (ELCC 3.1)	The proposal includes a clear and well thought out action plan that focuses on effective deployment of human, fiscal, and material resources to guide the implementation of the SIP. The plan thoroughly delineates each of the major tasks to be accomplished in enacting the project; when each task will be completed; who is involved in accomplishing each task; the resources needed to complete each task; and specific "success signals" or process indicators that will be tracked to monitor completion of each stage of the project.	The proposal includes an action plan that describes how human, fiscal, and material resources will be used to implement the SIP. The plan delineates most of the major tasks needed to enact the project; when various tasks will be completed; who is involved in accomplishing each task; the resources needed to complete each task; and specific "success signals" or process indicators that will be tracked to monitor completion of each stage of the project. Some necessary tasks or implementation details are vaguely described or missing.	The action plan included details tasks, time lines, persons responsible, resources, and success indicators, but does so in a fashion that is unlikely to result in successful deployment of human, fiscal, and material resources to accomplish the stated purpose. Significant tasks are inadequately spelled out or are missing entirely.	The action plan is poorly organized, severely lacking in detail, or wholly missing. It is entirely unclear how any proposed actions can result in successful implementation of the project.

Budget: Use of new and existing resources to facilitate SIP (5%) (ELCC 3.3)	The proposal includes a detailed and well thought out budget summary that demonstrates the ability to identify, seek and procure new and existing resources to facilitate the implementation of SIP project. The budget includes a synopsis of the funding needed to accomplish the project; a description of any existing resources that will be devoted to the project; and a discussion of how authority to use these resources has been or will be procured.	The proposal includes a budget summary that spells out in general terms how resources will be identified and procured to facilitate the implementation of the SIP project. Funding needed to accomplish the project is identified; a description of any existing resources that will be devoted to the project is outlined; and a discussion of how authority to use these resources has been or will be procured is described.	A budget summary is presented, but it is lacking in sufficient detail or is missing necessary components. The use of existing resources is not well thought out, and/or procedures for leveraging these resources are undeveloped or missing.	The budget is poorly organized, severely lacking in detail, or wholly inadequate to support the objective and action plan described.
Evaluation: Plan to monitor and evaluate the project (15%) (ELCC 1.4)	A clear, well developed plan to monitor and evaluate the project is presented, which specifies how data related to each educational indicator will be collected, when these data will be collected, and how they will be analyzed. The evaluation plan includes steps that will be taken to examine and adjust the project during enactment (i.e., monitor implementation) and to summatively assess the efficacy of the project in terms of reducing the identified performance gap.	A plan to monitor and evaluate the project is presented, which specifies how data related to most of the identified educational indicators will be collected, when these data will be collected, and how they will be analyzed. The evaluation plan includes general steps that will be taken to monitor implementation and to summatively assess the efficacy of the project.	A plan to monitor and evaluate the project is presented, but it lacks specificity and/or is not clearly connected to the espoused objectives of the SIP. Steps that will be taken to collect and analyze various data are unclear, as are methods that will be used to monitor implementation and to summatively assess the efficacy of the project.	The evaluation plan is poorly organized, lacks sufficient detail, or is wholly inadequate to support the evaluation of the project.
Consequence analysis: Identification of potential issues related to enactment of plan within the school and school community (10%) (ELCC 4.2)	The proposal concludes with a detailed analysis of the benefits and limitations of the proposed project design, highlighting possible issues relating to enactment of the plan within the school and school community. Advantages and disadvantages of the project and evaluation design are highlighted, including an assessment of issues relating to the	The proposal concludes with a general analysis of the benefits and limitations of the proposed project design, including issues relating to the support and involvement of important stakeholders. Obvious advantages and disadvantages of the project and evaluation design are identified. Select issues related to implementation fidelity and trustworthiness of the research evaluation design	The proposal concludes with a cursory analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed design. Issues of stakeholder involvement, implementation fidelity, and trustworthiness are only superficially addressed.	The proposal concludes with a general restatement of the project's purpose and/or description, but lacks any reasonable reflection on the strengths or weaknesses of the proposed design. A consequence analysis is not

	involvement and support of important stakeholders within the school community. Issues relating to implementation fidelity and the trustworthiness of the evaluation research design are clearly spelled out.	are explored, though some important potential issues are not identified.		evident.
Support: Informed consumer of educational theory and concepts (5%) (ELCC 6.1)	Specific, developed ideas and/or evidence from research are used to support the selection of the achievement gap and the strategy identified for addressing it.	Supporting research used to support the project lacks specificity or is loosely developed.	General supporting ideas or evidence are presented.	Few to no solid supporting ideas or evidence from research are included.
Organization of proposal (5%)	Proposal is powerfully organized and fully developed	Proposal includes logical progression of ideas aided by clear transitions	Proposal includes brief skeleton (introduction, body, conclusion) but lacks effective transitions	Proposal lacks logical progression of ideas
Mechanics and APA (5%)	Nearly error-free which reflects clear understanding of APA and thorough proofreading	Occasional grammatical errors and questionable word choice	Errors in grammar and punctuation, but spelling has been proofread	Frequent errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation

EDLE 690 Class Participation

	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaching Expectations	Does Not Meet Expectations	Score/ Level
Attendance (30%)	Exemplary attendance, no tardies	Near perfect attendance, few tardies	Occasional (2-3) absences or tardies	Frequent (>3) absences or tardies	
Discussion participation (35%)	Consistently actively engaged in class discussions--both large and small group. Asks good questions, responds to others' comments, and makes original contributions.	Sometimes actively engaged in class discussions--both large and small group. Listens well, but may be quiet most of the time.	Sometimes appears distracted in class. Occasionally participates in large and/or small group discussions.	Rarely engages in class discussions.	
Discussion Board (35%)	Made insightful and helpful contributions to Discussion Board discussions. Made at least the minimum number of required postings.	Made helpful contributions to Discussion Board discussions. May not have been consistently responsive to others.	Did not make the minimum required number of contributions to Discussion Board discussions.	Did not participate in one or more Discussion Board discussions.	