

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**  
**COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**  
**EDLE 816 Instructional Leadership— Instructional Leadership in**  
**Curriculum and Instruction**

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**Schedule information**

Meeting times: Wednesdays, 4:30 – 7:10 pm

All students are expected to attend every class session. Personal problems that prevent students from attending class should be reported ahead of time to the instructor via telephone or e-mail.

Location: TH L019

**Course Description**

**EDLE 816: Instructional Leadership—Curriculum and Instruction. (3:3:0)**

This course focuses on curriculum and instruction theory, policy, and practice with a research emphasis on instructional leadership. Students develop research proposals to investigate instructional leadership in schools and districts, and relate instructional leadership to their own specific research interests.

**Course Objectives**

Taught in tandem with EDLE 818, this course immerses students in theory and research that shape perspectives on curriculum and help define instructional leadership. Central to the notion of instructional leadership is the school leader's role in activities such as curriculum design and the support of effective pedagogy. The course examines instructional leadership through the following lenses: 1) Classical, progressive and critical perspectives on curriculum and pedagogy; 2) the purpose of education and rationales for various curricula; 3) the impact of curricular and pedagogical ideas on teaching practice; and 4) the relationship between curriculum and assessment. Students become familiar with theories and philosophies of curriculum and instruction, as well as empirical research that explain instructional leadership. Students will emerge from the course with a clear understanding of how instructional leadership might be investigated and if/how it informs their own specific research interests.

In addition to pre-determined readings and experiences, students will engage in independent investigations of literature related to instructional leadership. The course is designed around the theme of connecting *theory, research, and practice*. Thus, we will explore the types of questions listed below:

1. Theory:

- What is “a curriculum”? Who determines the curriculum students receive? What are the differences among a curriculum, mandated content standards, and assessment?
- How does pedagogy relate to or interact with curriculum? Who decides which pedagogy is appropriate in a particular setting?
- How do leaders address issues of who is teaching what to whom and in what context?
- What does it mean to improve student and school performance?
- What is meant by the term “instructional leadership”?
- How does leadership theory inform instructional leadership specifically?

2. Research:

- How has curriculum changed in the NCLB era? To what degree are there variations in curriculum from state to state, district to district, school to school, or classroom
  - to classroom? What has happened to curricula outside the “core”? How do
  - principals and other leaders influence curricula?
- How have standardization and assessment influenced pedagogy? What is the alignment between pedagogy taught in pre-service training compared to what is needed/valued in schools? What do principals and other leaders know about pedagogy and in what ways do they act on their knowledge?
- What place do curriculum and pedagogy have in efforts to improve student achievement and the overall quality of the educational experience?

3. Practice:

- How will theory and research about curriculum, pedagogy, and leadership influence your work as an educational leader?
- In what ways do current practices diverge from what theory and research suggest?
  - What are the reasons behind these divergences?
- How do university preparation programs (both teacher education and education leadership) interact with school districts in support of instruction generally and instructional leadership specifically?

## **Student Outcomes**

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Demonstrate clear understanding of major theories of curriculum, pedagogy, and instructional leadership through discussion, presentation and written paper assignments;
2. Read research literature and present persuasive written and oral critiques;

3. Engage in conversation to explore topics in their field of interest that represent opportunities for future investigation;
4. Use theory to frame researchable questions and use extant literature to inform research problems relating to instructional leadership; and
5. Further develop their ability to write doctoral-level papers.

### **National Standards**

The following Education Leadership Constituent Council standards are addressed in this course:

- 2.2 Provide effective instructional program
- 2.3 Apply best practice to student learning
- 5.1 Acts with integrity
- 5.3 Acts ethically
- 6.1 Understand the larger context
- 6.2 Respond to the larger context
- 6.3 Influence the larger context

### **Nature of Course Delivery**

The central methods for learning in this course will be research-based inquiry and discussion. Broadly speaking, your primary responsibilities will be to: 1) Read the literature; 2) Share your questions, reflect on your experiences, and engage in productive discussion that uses research to inform practice; and 3) Share your written work and provide feedback to others in a respectful fashion.

1. Classes will reflect a balance of activities that enable students to participate actively in the development of their *personae* as scholars. 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. support our points of view with evidence;
  - 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 scholars. Students are expected to:
  - a. write papers that are well researched, proofread, submitted in a timely fashion, and consistent with 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. Therefore, 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. recognize and celebrate each other's ideas and accomplishments; and
- e. show an awareness of each other's needs.

### **Course materials**

The texts and materials that may be used in the context of this independent study course will include (but are not limited to) the following:

- English, Fenwick J. (2010). *Deciding What to Teach and Test*: Corwin Press. [3rd edition]
- Jacobs, Hayes H. (2010) *Curriculum 21: Essential Education for a Changing World* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
- Eisner, E. (2002) *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Virginia Standards of Learning

Other readings will be incorporated based on the assigned review of literature (see below).

Learning activities and class projects:

- Student will complete the following assignments embedded in EDLE 616 (Design of Curriculum Framework, Professional Development for Curriculum Change), and the following:
  - Paper: Critique of curriculum framework or PD plan based on Eisner; and
  - Paper: Statement of a Research Problem and Literature Review.

### **Grading**

Consistent with expectations of doctoral courses in Education Leadership, grading is based heavily on student performance on written assignments. The assignments constructed for this course reflect a mix of skills associated with synthesis and critique. Overall, written work will be assessed using the following broad criteria:

- Application of concepts reflected in class discussion and readings, and your ability to pick the most salient concepts and apply them.
- Creativity and imagination; papers provide an opportunity to speculate, to float questions or ideas reflecting your appreciation of the literature.
- Organization and writing. A clear, concise, and well-organized paper will earn a better grade.

Additionally, a portion of your 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 leadership and participation - 20 points**

Students are expected to participate actively in problem based learning, which involves substantial small group work and public presentation. Class participation also involves large and small group discussions and serving as a critical friend to other students.

As stated earlier, attendance is expected for all classes. If you must be absent, please notify me by e-mail or phone. More than one absence may result in a reduction in participation points. Likewise, 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.

### **Written assignments - 80 points**

The papers required for this course are based in part on the assignments embedded in EDLE 616 augmented by two additional papers:

1. Bridging Research to Practice (10 points)
2. Statement of a Research Problem and Paper Presentation Proposal (35 points)  
**(Performance-Based Assessment; combined with EDLE 818)**

Late work: It is expected that student work will be submitted on time. Late assignments may receive a deduction in points; however, assignments will not be accepted more than **48 hours** after a due date.

Rewrites: Students who receive a grade lower than 3.5 may re-write their papers. All re-writes are due one week after the student receives the initial grade and comments.

### **Grading scale:**

|    |   |                 |
|----|---|-----------------|
| A+ | = | 100 points      |
| A  | = | 95-99 points    |
| A- | = | 90-94 points    |
| B+ | = | 87-89 points    |
| B  | = | 84-86 points    |
| B- | = | 80-83 points    |
| C  | = | 75-79 points    |
| F  | = | below 75 points |

### **GMU Policies and Resources for students**

- a. Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/> ].
- b. Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>]
- c. 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.
- d. 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/> ].
- e. 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/> ].
  - f. Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
  - g. 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/>

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

**Proposed schedule of classes with readings:**

Students will follow the schedule of EDLE 616.001, including assignments embedded in this class, with the additional two assignments embedded in this syllabus to differentiate the doctoral-level work required in 816.

| Date                 | Topic   | Readings, Talks, Etc.   | Assignment Due Dates     |
|----------------------|---|---|--------------------------|
| Session 1<br>Aug 27  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Course Overview</li> <li>• Course in 'Miniature'</li> <li>• Learning from EDLE 618</li> <li>• The World of Ken Robinson</li> </ul>  | Accessing prior knowledge   |                          |
| Session 2<br>Sept 3  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myths about Curriculum</li> <li>• Historical influences on Curriculum</li> <li>• Assignment #1 –Q/A</li> </ul>   | Taskstream materials<br><br>Read Fenwick English, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, pp. 57-60.   |                          |
| Session 3<br>Sept 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideologies of Curriculum</li> <li>• Curriculum &amp; Pacing 'Guides'</li> <li>• Looking at Assignments #2/#3</li> </ul>  | Curriculum Philosophies' Inventory (Taskstream)<br><br>Read Fenwick English, Chapter 2, pp. 63-76                                       |                          |
| Session 4<br>Sept 17 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sociology of Curriculum: Simulation</li> <li>• The Politics of Curriculum: An introduction</li> <li>• Assignment #2- Q/A</li> </ul>  | Taskstream Weblinks<br><br>Read David Berliner, "Fixing the Schools Isn't Everything"<br><b>[Taskstream]</b>                            | <b>Assignment #1 Due</b> |
| Session 5<br>Sept 24 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The relationship between Assessment &amp; The Tested Curriculum</li> <li>• The Politics of Curriculum</li> <li>• NCLB: What changes <b>might</b> re-authorization have wrought on behalf of children?</li> <li>• Assignment #2 continued: Q/A</li> </ul> | Kristen Williams' P/P [P/P in Taskstream]<br><br>Read "Politics and Education Don't Mix" (Taskstream)<br><br>Bring school data to class |                          |

|                      |   |  |  |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| Session 6<br>Oct 1   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction to UBD [1] &amp; the Written Curriculum</li> <li>• Bill Moyer on Inequality</li> <li>• Kohn's The Case Against Standardized Testing</li> </ul>  | Taskstream Handouts and Weblinks<br><br>Bring draft of assignment 2 to class for peer review |  |
| Session 7<br>Oct 8   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UBD continued [2]</li> <li>• The Taught Curriculum</li> <li>• Introduction to Curriculum Mapping [1]</li> </ul>  | Taskstream Handouts and Weblinks   | <b>Assignment #2 due in Taskstream</b>   |
| Session 8<br>Oct 15  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E-Class TBA</li> </ul>   |  |  |
| Session 9<br>Oct 22  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SOL and UBD and Curriculum Mapping – Connections?</li> <li>• Aligning the Curriculum</li> <li>• Generic vs. specific curriculum</li> </ul>   | Read Fenwick English, Chapter 3<br><br>Taskstream Handouts                                   |  |
| <b>OCT 25</b>        | <b>EDLE Leader Launch Conference</b>  | <b>8:30am – 12:30pm</b>  |  |
| Session 10<br>Oct 29 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum Evaluation - 'City Drive Case Study'</li> <li>• Curriculum Alignment - Continued</li> <li>• The Responsive Classroom examined</li> </ul>  | 'City Drive Case Study' on [T]<br><br>Responsive Classroom Weblink                           | <b>Assignment #3 due [in Taskstream]</b> |
| Session 11<br>Nov 5  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New ideas on Curriculum Design &amp; Implementation</li> <li>• The Common Core</li> <li>• Assignment #4 – Q/A</li> </ul>   | Taskstream Handouts  |  |
| Session 12<br>Nov 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter Four Poster Session: Essential Understandings &amp; Essential Skills</li> <li>• Curriculum Development and Professional Development</li> <li>• Class Workshop for Assignment #4</li> </ul> | Read – Fenwick English, Ch 4<br><br>5 Models of PD [Sparks]—[Taskstream]                     |  |
| Session 13<br>Nov 19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Presentations</li> </ul>   |  | <b>Assignment #4 due (in class)</b>      |
| Session 14<br>Dec 3  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group Presentations</li> <li>• Course Wrap-Up</li> </ul>   |  |  |

## **Critique: Bridging Research to Practice**

### **Rationale**

An effective critic finds both positive and negative attributes of the subject she or he is criticizing.

Understanding the difference between potentially good ideas that are grounded in theory and research and apparently good ideas that have no foundation in theory or research is important for both scholars and practitioners. As a scholar, you need to be able to distinguish among good research, poor and/or biased research, and no research. As a leader in your school or district, you will be more effective if you can help others make such distinctions. This assignment is intended to help you become a more highly developed connoisseur of publications in the area of curriculum and instruction.

### **Tasks**

1. Read Eisner, The educational imagination
2. Using the key concepts Eisner introduces, examine either the curriculum framework or the professional development plan you created through the lens of theory. What would Eisner say about your work -- the likelihood that implementation of either would realize valued goals and demonstrate sound instructional leadership? What would you change in your plan based on Eisner? What practical issues might serve as barriers to success?

This paper should be approximately seven pages.

## Assessment Rubric for Literature Critique: Bridging Research to Practice

|  | <b>Exceeds Expectations<br/>4 points</b>   | <b>Meets Expectations<br/>3 points</b>   | <b>Approaching<br/>Expectations<br/>2 points</b>  | <b>Falls Below<br/>Expectations<br/>1 point</b>  |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| <b>Introduction (10%)</b> The introduction orients the reader to the purpose of the paper and introduce the focus of your analysis.    | The introduction describes the purpose and foreshadows important conclusions through the thesis.   | The introduction provides an adequate description of the paper and suggests a general roadmap for the paper. | The introduction is vague and does not adequately orient the reader to the paper.   | The introduction is either missing or insufficient; there is little consideration of reader's perspective.               |
| <b>Description of theory (15%)</b> The paper includes a brief description of the salient points incorporated from Eisner's work        | The paper includes an accurate, clear and thorough description of concepts utilized from Eisner that apply well to the critique  | The paper includes an adequate description of some concepts from Eisner.                                     | The description of theory is cursory, vague or incomplete.  | The description of theory is missing or fundamentally flawed such that it provides no guidance whatsoever to the reader. |
| <b>Critique (40%)</b> The paper includes a clear critique using concepts introduced  | Criticisms are fair and persuasive. Logical arguments are presented that convince the reader of the point of view presented in the paper. Vivid examples and details are employed in the analysis. | Criticisms make sense and follow logically from what is revealed based on the application of theory..        | Criticisms are difficult to follow or in some ways do not seem valid.   | The paper does not contain a critical analysis, but tends to summarize the articles.                                     |
| <b>Implications (25%)</b> The paper includes a summary that synthesizes main points and discusses implications for leadership practice | Clear and convincing connections are made between the analysis and implications for practice, including possible changes to original plans and practical implications of these changes.            | Reasonable connections are made between theory and practice.   | Connections between theory and practice are vague or incomplete.  | Connections between theory and practice are missing or illogical.  |
| <b>Mechanics and APA (10%)</b> Your written work should always represent you as accurate and precise.                                  | The paper is nearly error-free, which reflects clear understanding APA format and thorough proofreading.   | The paper contains occasional grammatical errors, questionable word choice, and minor APA errors.            | Errors in grammar and punctuation are present, but spelling has been proofread. There are several violations of APA format. | The paper contains frequent errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and APA format.                                    |

## Statement of a Research Problem and Paper Presentation Proposal

### **Rationale**

This assignment requires students to establish a research focus by writing a statement of their research problem that would be appropriate for a dissertation proposal or dissertation. In addition to practicing writing a statement of their research problem, students are required to write a literature review demonstrating the manner in which research of their problem will extend or address gaps in the current body of research. Thus, students practice two very important skills: 1) providing a persuasive argument for investigating a particular research problem, and 2) persuading peer reviewers that their research is worthy of publication. Students are expected to be novices, not experts, in both processes.

This is the culminating assignment for the course in which you will put the literature you have found to work for you. The skill of using research in this way is vital to scholarship.

### **Tasks**

1. Write a statement of your research problem that has the following components:
  - A brief introduction that orients the reader to the topic
  - A statement of purpose—What do you intend to learn from your research?
  - A statement of significance—Why is it important to conduct this research?
  - Two – four research questions
2. Write a literature review that demonstrates the need/significance of your work’s contribution to the body of existing scholarly research in your area. The review should cite a minimum of 8-10 relevant scholarly sources.

### **Assessment Rubric for Statement of a Research Problem and Paper Presentation Proposal**

|   | <b>Exceeds Expectations<br/>4 points</b>   | <b>Meets Expectations<br/>3 points</b>   | <b>Approaching<br/>Expectations<br/>2 points</b>   | <b>Falls Below<br/>Expectations<br/>1 point</b>           |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <u>Introduction</u><br>(10%)<br>Introduction orients the reader to the purpose of the paper—a discussion of your intended research focus. | The introduction draws the reader into the paper effectively. The thesis is clear and analytical, dealing directly with purpose and significance, and requires demonstration through coherent arguments and support from published literature. | The introduction orients the reader to the paper. The thesis is apparent, though not entirely clear. It may be more descriptive than analytical. | The introduction explains what is in the paper, but lacks a clear and analytical thesis. | The introduction is weak. The paper lacks a clear thesis. |

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <p><u>Purpose (10%)</u><br/>It is important to explain to the reader what you wish to study.</p>   | <p>The purpose is clear and compelling and well supported by published literature, if possible. Purpose is explained from multiple perspectives (e.g., practical and academic) in a logical and persuasive manner.</p>   | <p>The purpose of the research is clear and engaging.</p>  | <p>The purpose is apparent, but confusing.</p>   | <p>The purpose is missing or unclear.</p>  |
| <p><u>Significance (25%)</u><br/>It is important to explain to the reader why it is meaningful to pursue your chosen topic.</p>                        | <p>The significance is clear and compelling and well supported by published literature. Significance is explained from multiple perspectives (e.g., practical and academic) in a logical and persuasive manner, and significance is clearly linked to purpose.</p> | <p>The author weaves together persuasive arguments regarding the significance of the topic that follow logically from the stated purpose.</p>  | <p>Significance is apparent, but not well supported by literature and/or seems unrelated to purpose.</p>   | <p>Significance is unclear or missing.</p>   |
| <p><u>Research Questions (25%)</u><br/>Readers need to know research questions to help them understand the research.</p>                               | <p>The research questions are inclusive and stimulating. The questions are clearly and persuasively linked to purpose and significance.</p>  | <p>A reasonable set of questions is presented. The questions clearly follow from purpose and significance.</p>   | <p>The questions not very informative or researchable. Links to purpose and significance may not be clear.</p>   | <p>The questions are inadequate.</p>   |
| <p><u>Literature Review (30%)</u><br/>It is important for the reader to see the importance of your research in the context of existing literature.</p> | <p>The review uses timely and foundational peer-reviewed literature in a manner that shows a clear need for the student's research to fill a gap in, or extend, the current body of scholarly work.</p>  | <p>The review uses a variety of relevant peer-reviewed literature in a manner that allows the reader to see how the student's research could contribute to the current body of scholarly work.</p> | <p>The review's use of relevant peer-reviewed research is inconsistent, making it difficult to determine the contribution of the student's research to the current body of scholarly work.</p> | <p>The review's use of peer-reviewed literature as a vehicle for demonstrating relevance to the current body of scholarly work is either missing or unclear.</p> |