George Mason University
Graduate School of Education
Literacy Program

EDRD 635 School-Based Inquiry into Literacy (Section 6L1)
Spring 2015
Monday 4:30 – 7:10
Arlington Campus - Founders Hall, Room 313

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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.

Course Outcomes
As a result of this course, students will be able to:
1. Identify specific areas of literacy interest; plan research steps for gaining information about their interest; and begin to carry out those plans and articulate the answers derived.
2. Read and analyze literacy studies related to their research interest and write an intelligent and coherent literature review.
3. Write an opinion article advocating for an approach or issue based on their research interest in literacy.
4. Write a grant proposal to fund a project or materials to enhance her/his role as a literacy leader.
5. Make a formal presentation to their peers on a research plan and preliminary findings.

Nature of Course Delivery
This course will be conducted in a face-to-face context and taught through a combination of lecture, discussion, and individual consultation.

Standards Addressed
NCATE Assessment #8: Teacher Inquiry and Outreach

IRA Standards: #1 (Foundational Knowledge), #2 (Curriculum & Instruction), and #6
(Professional Learning and Leadership)
IRA Elements for Reading Specialists/Literacy Coaches: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 6.2, 6.4.

 Virginia State Standards:
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.

Electronic Requirements
Students **must have access to email** and the Internet, either at home, work or GMU
campus. GMU provides students with free **email accounts** that **must be accessed for**
information sent from the university or the Graduate School of Education. Go to
http://mason.gmu.edu/ for information on accessing mail.

After introductory training, students will also be expected to access Blackboard prior to
every class session to download agendas and other pertinent course documents.
Blackboard can be accessed by going to mymason.gmu.edu
At the "Organization" tab is pertinent information for students related to all aspects of the
literacy program as well as other important information about licensure and graduation.
Be sure to consult this website frequently.

College of Education and Human Development

TASKSTREAM REQUIREMENTS
Every student registered for any literacy course with a required performance-based
assessment is required to submit this assessment (literature review, op-ed piece, grant
proposal) to TaskStream (regardless of whether a course is an elective, a onetime course
or part of an undergraduate minor). Evaluation of the performance-based assessment by
the course instructor will also be completed in TaskStream. Failure to submit the
assessment to TaskStream will result in the course instructor reporting the course grade
as Incomplete(IN). Unless the IN grade is changed upon completion of the required
TaskStream submission, the IN will convert to an F nine weeks into the following
semester.

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/honorcode/**].

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 teir 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 http://gse.gmu.edu/

Program and Course Policies and Requirements

Performance-Based Assessments
Satisfactory completion of each PBA as well as posting to TaskStream is required to complete this course. The Taskstream assessment system can be found at https://www.taskstream.com/pub/. Students are required to submit the designated PBA so that the assignment can be evaluated when the assignment is due. No final grades for EDRD 635 will be posted until ALL required PBAs are posted to TaskStream.

Required State Licensure Assessment
Reading for Virginia Educators: Reading Specialist (RVE for Reading Specialists)
Taking this test is a program requirement for students in the K-12 Reading Specialist
Concentration, and achieving a passing score is a state licensure requirement for reading
specialists. Students must scan their score sheet and post it to TaskStream by the last
session of EDRD 635.

This is a new version of the test that went into effect July 1, 2011. If a student has taken
the earlier version of the test, the Virginia Reading Assessment for Reading Specialists
(VRA), the score on the old test will be accepted. In the Spring of 2011, The Virginia
Board of Education has set passing scores for the RVE assessment. Registration
information for the RVE for Reading Specialists is available on the ETS Web site
http://www.ets.org/praxis/register. Information on the test can be found at
http://www.va.nesinc.com/.

Graduation and Licensure
- RVE (you must have a passing score on this test before you apply for licensure). See
  http://www.va.nesinc.com/ for more information.
- Meet with GMU Licensure Specialist, Travis Holder (tholder@gmu.edu; 703 993-
  2094). You will apply for your license *immediately* after you have completed the
  literacy coursework and master's degree. If you wait until the following term you
  may have to pay a fee to re-activate your file.
- 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.

Late Assignment Policy
All assignments are to be completed and delivered on their due dates. Late assignments
may have points deducted at the professor's discretion.

Class Participation Policy
Students are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions and conferences. Absences
or excessive tardiness may have a negative effect on performance due to missing
important assignment information and guidance.

Required Course Readings
The syllabus lists required readings, which may be accessed through GMU electronic
databases.

Course Requirements and Grading
The following course requirements will be explained in detail during class meetings:

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Grant Proposal	5/5 (latest due date)	25
Op-Ed Piece	5/5 (latest due date)	25
Literature Review	3/17	50
Teacher Research Project and Presentation	4/21 & 4/28	50
	Total	**150**

Grading Scale (Percentage of total possible points)

A   95 – 100   (150 – 142PTS)

A-   90 – 94   (141 – 135PTS)

B+   86 – 89   (134 – 129PTS)

B   80 – 85   (128 – 120PTS)

C   70 – 79   (119 – 105PTS)

Tentative Agenda

Session/Date/	Topics	Readings/Assignments Due
1 1/20/15	Course Introduction & Requirements	
2 1/27/15	Literacy Leaders as Researchers An Introduction to Teacher Research	Brydon-Miller & Maguire (2009). Calhoun (2002)
3 2/3/15	Literacy Leaders as Researchers Writing a Literature Review	Zeichner (2003)
4 2/10/15	Individual Conferencing on Proposed Research Projects	Research Project Proposal Due
5 2/17/15	**TBA**	
6 2/24/15	Individual Conferencing on Research Project Literature Reviews	Draft of Literature Review for Research Project Due

7	3/3/15	Individual Conferencing on Research Project Literature Reviews	Draft of Literature Review for Research Project Due
8	3/10/15	**Spring Break**	
9	3/17/15	Gathering and Interpreting Data in Teacher Research	Bourke (2008) Keaton et al (2007) Reiner (1998)
10	3/24/15	Gathering and Interpreting Data in Teacher Research	Smiles (2008) Van Sluys (2010) Literature Review for Research Project Due
11	3/31/15	School-Based Inquiry – Putting All the Pieces Together	Morrell (2006)
12	4/7/15	Preparing Presentations of Research Projects	
13	4/14/15	**TBA**	
14	4/21/15	**TBA**	
15	4/28/15	Research Project Presentations	Research Project Presentations PowerPoints due
16	5/5/15	Final Class Session Research Project Presentations	Final due date for Op-Ed Piece Final due date for Grant Proposal Research Project Presentations PowerPoints due

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Course PBA

This Performance Based Assessment (PBA) is intended to instill a culture of outreach in coaching to support teachers in schools. Competent and effective reading specialists and literacy coaches should be prepared to investigate and understand the needs of the teachers they serve, as well as to advocate and secure resources and services for teachers and students in their schools. Therefore, the PBA for this course is comprised of three integrated parts:

(1) Literature review

(2) Op-ed piece, and
(3) Grant proposal.

A detailed description of each of these three assignments is provided below with a rubric for evaluating each part. Please follow all APA guidelines to complete this assignment. The PBA is not considered to be complete unless all three parts are submitted.

Part I: *Literature Review*

Literacy specialists need to be knowledgeable of the current research in literacy. Choose a topic in the field of literacy that you think that needs to be developed in your school. Review the current (past 10 – 15 years), relevant (focused on your topic), peer-reviewed research on the topic. Also, review any seminal work and theoretical bases that would ground your topic in the research literature. Write a well-organized synthesis and critique of the research on the topic that captures what has been done and what needs to be done. Your review should conclude with a clear and insightful analysis of how your topic contributes to literacy success as well as how this knowledge can be used to address the needs of all learners.

Literature Review Rubric

IRA Standards/ Elements	Exemplary (3)	Proficient (2)	Developing (1)	Not Met (0)
1.1c Critical stance toward the scholarship of the profession	The review offers an effective synthesis and critique of the body of literature on the topic.	The review provides only a synthesis of research on the topic.	The review provides a summary of the research on the topic.	The review is not well organized; research is not clearly summarized.
1.1d Read and understand the literature and research about factors that contribute to literacy success	The review draws original and insightful conclusions about the factors that contribute to literacy success.	The review concludes with a synthesis of factors that contribute to literacy success.	The review includes a summary of factors that contribute to literacy success.	The review does not address how factors contribute to literacy success.
1.2a Interpret and summarize historically shared knowledge that addresses the needs of all learners	The review draws original and insightful conclusions about knowledge from the field that can be used to address the needs of all learners.	The review provides a synthesis of knowledge from the field that can be used to address the needs of all learners.	The review provides a summary of knowledge from the field that can be used to address the needs of all learners.	The review does not provide a view that addresses the needs of all learners.

Part II: *Op-Ed Piece*

Literacy specialists are well-educated professionals. Accordingly, they are in a position to advocate for the education profession. For this assignment, you are to write an opinion piece or a letter to policy makers based on the information that was developed in the literature review (Part I). The piece should include ideas for organizational change, professional development, or other recommendations to those who are in a position to effect change.

The opinion piece should be about 500 – 750 words and should include the following characteristics: (a) is tightly focused on one issue; (b) the topic is presented clearly in the first paragraph; (c) the information is credible and well researched – based on the literature reviewed; (d) the issue is timely, can be controversial, but is not offensive; (e) the piece has a clear point of view; (f) the piece makes reference to other points of view, where applicable; (g) the piece concludes with a 'next steps' or a 'call to action' that suggest what can be done.

The letter should be sent to the District Office, the School Board, or a local newspaper or journal. Evidence that the piece has been submitted is required for successful completion of Part II.

Op-Ed Rubric

IRA Standards/ Elements	Exemplary (3)	Proficient (2)	Developing (1)	Not Met (0)	Score
1.2b Inform educators and others about the historically shared knowledge base in literacy and its role in literacy education	Provides accurate and credible (indicates source of facts) information based on research and professional knowledge	Provides accurate information on the topic based on research and professional knowledge but does not indicate source of facts	Provides information on the topic based on professional knowledge and opinion	Does not provide information on the topic or bases information on opinion only	
1.3 b Communicates the importance of fair-mindedness, empathy, and ethical behavior in literacy instruction and professional behavior	The piece provides a strong yet positive message and very strongly models fair mindedness and ethical principles	The piece provides a strong yet positive message and strongly models fair mindedness and ethical principles	The piece provides a generally positive message but does not model fair mindedness and ethical principles	The piece does not provide a positive message nor does it model ethical principles	
6.4a Demonstrate an understanding of local, state, and national policies that affect literacy instruction	Provides an accurate and well-connected tie between the topic relevant policies that affect literacy instruction	Provides accurate information about relevant policies that affect literacy instruction	Provides information about relevant policies, but the information is not completely accurate	Does not address policy issues	
6.4c Promote effective communication and	The piece provides a well-reasoned next	The piece provides a next steps or call	The piece provides a next	The piece does not provide a	

collaboration among stakeholders	steps or call to action that is within the purview of readers to do	to action that is well-reasoned but not within the purview of most readers	steps or call to action that is not well reasoned	next steps or call to action	
6.4d Advocate with various groups for needed organizational and instructional changes to promote effective literacy instruction	The piece provides clear and purposeful direction for members of various groups regarding changes that would promote effective literacy instruction	The piece provides clear direction for members of various groups regarding changes that would promote	The piece indicates that various groups should promote effective literacy instruction but does not provide direction	The piece does not address changes that could be implemented by various groups to promote effective literacy instruction	

Evidence that letter was submitted?   Yes/No

Part III. *Grant Proposal*

Literacy specialists are in a position to procure funding to create, support, or develop literacy programs or instruction within the school. Based on the topic of the literature review conducted in Part I and the opinion piece in Part II, locate a small grant opportunity that addresses your school's needs and interests. You will write the proposal based upon the instructions for that particular grant and submit the grant within the grantor's deadline for submission. Your proposal should follow all of the guidelines suggested by the funding agency and include all of the necessary permissions and attachments required to submit the grant application. Therefore, you must submit the grant proposal guidelines with your proposal. Evidence that the piece has been submitted is required for successful completion of Part III.

Grant Proposal Rubric

IRA Standards/ Elements	Exemplary (3)	Proficient (2)	Developing (1)	Not Met (0)	Score
1.1a Interpret major theories of reading and writing processes and development to understand the needs of all readers in diverse contexts	The proposal presents a well-researched and well-defined and well-connected theoretical base to support the work to be funded	The proposal presents a well-defined theoretical base but it is not well connected to the work to be funded	The proposal presents a theoretical base, but it is not well defined	The proposal does not present a theoretical base for the work to be funded	
1.1d Read and understand the literature and research about factors that contribute to	The proposal presents a concise and well-researched treatment of the current and	The proposal presents current and relevant knowledge of the topic for the work to be funded	The proposal includes a review of research that is relevant to the work to be funded	The proposal does not include a review of research on the topic	

reading success	relevant knowledge of topic for the work to be funded				
2.1 Demonstrate an understanding of the research and literature that undergirds the reading and writing curriculum for all students	The proposal demonstrates a very strong understanding of the research and literature that undergirds the reading and writing curriculum for all students	The proposal demonstrates a strong understanding of the research and literature that undergirds the reading and writing curriculum for all students	The proposal demonstrates a moderate understanding of the research and literature that undergirds the reading and writing curriculum for all students	The proposal demonstrates a limited understanding of the research and literature that undergirds the reading and writing curriculum for all students	
6.2d Demonstrate effective interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills	The proposal demonstrates a very strong understanding of audience and professionalism in communication	The proposal demonstrates a strong understanding of audience and professionalism in communication	The proposal demonstrates a moderately strong understanding of audience and professionalism in communication	The proposal demonstrates a weak understanding of audience and professionalism in communication	
6.4b Write proposals that enable schools to obtain additional funding to support literacy efforts	The plan for using the funds is well organized and presents a clear picture of how the funds will support literacy efforts in the school as well as who will be involved in executing the plan and how the plan will be evaluated	The plan for using the funds is well organized and presents a clear picture of how the funds will support literacy efforts in the school. EITHER involved personnel OR evaluation of the plan are discussed, but not both	The plan for using the funds is well organized and presents a clear picture of how the funds will support literacy efforts in the school. NEITHER involved personnel NOR evaluation of the plan are discussed	The plan for using the funds is not clearly organized	

Teacher Research Project and Presentation

<u>Assignment</u>

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you the opportunity to conduct a teacher-research project and make a formal PowerPoint presentation to your peers on the teacher-research project.

<u>Completion Procedures for the Research Project</u>

1. Identify an issue/aspect of literacy to research

   This could be an area of concern/interest you have at the present time that has evolved out of your teaching experience, or it may be something that has piqued your interest from the course readings. It could also be related to your new/future identity as a reading specialist or coach. Consequently, the proposed research might be classroom based or school/district based.

2. Seek Knowledge

   This is your Literature Review. There are many sources for acquiring information about your research concern. Consult journals, books, yearbooks, etc.

3. Plan and Implement Research

   Based on your research concern, plan specific steps to carry out with groups of students or individuals. To refine your plan, it's helpful to pose questions that the research might answer.

   Your research might involve trying out strategies, meeting with students, teachers, administrators for interviews, gathering verbal reports, administering interest and attitude scales, and/or observing students or other teachers within genuine learning contexts.

4. Analyze Research Results

   In this phase you should gather all the data related to your research concern and make interpretations relative to your research questions. All interpretations and assertions should be supportable by the data.

<u>Presenting the Project</u>

The teacher research project presentation should be organized in the following way and include the following information:

- **A Rationale for the Teacher Research Concern**

  Include a clear description of your research concern. Discuss the relevance of the concern to the classroom, school, or district. Describe why the concern is important to you and what you expected your research would help you learn.

- **Key Findings from the Relevant Literature**

  Briefly discuss of the important supporting professional literature related to your concern. This should come from your literature review.

- **Summary of Research Methods**

  Describe how you implemented your research. Include (1) a description of participants (i.e., students, teachers, administrators); (2) what you did with the participants (i.e., interviewed, observed, taught strategies, assessed); (3) the timeframe of the research (i.e., when, how often).

- **Discussion of Preliminary Findings**

  Indicate what you found as a result of your preliminary data gathering. Focus on results that are related to your research concern.

- **Professional/Personal Reflections**

  Reflect on the findings of your research and discuss what they might mean to you as a teacher researcher. Focus your discussion on implications relative to the advancement of your professionalism as a literacy leader.

- **Exhibits/Artifacts**

  Share appropriate materials, including, if relevant, any questionnaires, inventories, assessments, sample student work, etc.

Evaluation

The presentation will be evaluated based on how it reflects a meaningful attempt to conduct teacher research and how succinctly and adequately all key aspects of the research project were covered. An evaluation rubric will be provided and explained in advance. Presentations should be completed within approximately 15 minutes.

COURSE READINGS

Bourke, R.T. (2008). First graders and fairy tales: One teacher's action research

of critical literacy. *The Reading Teacher, 62*(4), 304-312.

Brydon-Miller, M. & Maguire, P. (2009). Participatory action research: Contributions to

the development of practitioner inquiry in education. *Educational Action

Research*, *17*(1), 79–93.

Calhoun, E.F. (2002). Action research for school improvement. *Educational Leadership*,

59(6), 18-24.

Keaton, J.M., Palmer, B.C., Nicholas, K.R., & Lake, V. E. (2007). Direct instruction with

playful skill extensions: Action research in emergent literacy development.

Reading Horizons, *47*(3), 229-250.

Morrell, E. (2006). Critical participatory action research and the literacy achievement of

ethnic minority groups. *National Reading Conference Yearbook* (vol. 55), 1-18.

Reiner, K. (1998). Developing a kindergarten phonemic awareness program: An action

research project. *The Reading Teacher, 52*(1), 70-74.

Smiles, T. (2008). Connecting literacy and learning through collaborative action research.

Voices From the Middle, *15*(4), 32-39.

Van Sluys, K. (2010). Trying on and trying out: Participatory action research as a tool

for literacy and identity work in middle grades classrooms. *American Journal

of Community Psychology*, *46*, 139–151.

Zeichner, K.M. (2003). Teacher research as professional development for P-12.

Educational Action Research, *11*(2), 301-326.