

**George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Graduate School of Education**

Teaching Culturally, Linguistically Diverse & Exceptional Learners Program

EDCI 777 – 001

crn:71855

Research to Practice

3 Credits FALL 2015

Thursdays, 7:20 - 10 pm., Thompson Hall, Rm. L-018

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Course Description

A. Prerequisites/Co-requisites: All other program courses except EDRS 590 and elective, or permission of instructor.

B. University Catalog Course Description

Provides culminating experience that synthesizes and applies essential elements of second language teaching and learning. Emphasizes teacher as change agent through critical inquiry into practice. Promotes collaboration between ESL and grade-level teachers to advance achievement of English language learners and language minority students.

C. Expanded Course Description

Teachers are often encouraged to implement “research-based” practices, required to attend workshops where research findings are presented, provided with lists of books that synthesize research, and asked to suggest changes in practice based on the implications of research.

Although these practices have their usefulness, the assumption implicit in much of the discourse surrounding educational research is that teachers are consumers and/or objects of research, rather than producers of research. The past decade has seen a growing movement to upend those assumptions through an emphasis on the importance of teacher research. Thus, the research and theory we will read and the methodologies with which we will engage are those associated with “teacher research” (i.e., research conducted by teachers for professional purposes), and developing or deepening an inquiry stance. Teacher research positions teachers as producers of knowledge—professionals who can learn about and improve their practice by studying important questions that emerge from their own experiences and observations.

This class is designed to support you in using and building on the ideas and content you have encountered in your previous coursework. Most importantly, the course assists you as you consider ways to better support children and youth. In other words, your current and future students are at the center of our work. Toward these ends, the course requires you to conceptualize, design, and begin to implement an original research project in your school/classroom. Only if we attempt to live these action research (also called “teacher research” and “practitioner research”) processes in this course will you be able to use them eventually in your own teaching practices. Thus, for every activity in this course, you must act and study with multiple lenses—as a student, teacher, and advocate.

Although the work required to achieve these goals is intensive, the course is designed to provide you with much support. You will need to hit the ground running, starting your research project early, and working on it steadily. Through our readings, we will explore research methodologies, analyses of the history and impact of teacher research, and the efforts of other teacher researchers. Our readings and discussions will help you develop your own rationale and “road map” for your inquiry project. We will dig into readings together, write often and share our writing with one another, and support one another in our research goals.

COURSE DELIVERY

The course is delivered through a variety of on-line, face-to-face, and individualized instructional approaches. During class meetings there will be large group, small group, and individual activities. Participants conduct independent research, as well as communicate with one another and the instructor in person and via electronic media. In general, we will engage in four activities over the course of the semester:

1. Mini-lectures, activities, and discussions related to research methods led by the instructor and supported by course text and other selected readings
2. Discussions of the week’s readings led by the instructor and course participants
3. Research group meetings in which participants will concentrate on selected readings and provide feedback and support for one another’s writing and research process
4. Individual, small group, and whole group meetings to discuss research efforts.

*Please note that because you have much to learn from one another, and because teaching is often a collaborative effort, you will frequently work in groups. This will give you a chance to share ideas, to be exposed to a variety of perspectives (rather than only the professor’s), and to support one another as you continue to hone your teaching and research skills.

LEARNER OUTCOMES

This course is designed to enable candidates to:

1. Identify the basic elements of educational research, including methods (qualitative and quantitative), questions addressed, design, data collection and analysis, validity and reliability
2. Formulate an inquiry/action research question that is relevant to their work setting
3. Design and conduct an inquiry/action research study
4. Use inquiry/action research as a foundation for professional growth, improvement of instruction, and advocacy
5. Identify strategies for sharing the results of inquiry/action research

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

(National Board of Professional Teaching Standards; Teachers College Columbia Teacher Expectations; George Mason Dispositions for a Career Educator):

This course is designed to meet the following professional teaching standards:

GMU Dispositions for a Career Educator I, II, and III

- o Commitment to the Profession
- o Commitment to Honoring Professional Ethical Standards
- o Commitment to Key Elements of Professional Knowledge

Teachers College Columbia Teacher Expectations I and II

- o Lifelong Learners
- o Learner-Centered Educators

NBPTS Propositions 2, 3, and 4

- o Teachers Know the Subjects They Teach and How to Teach Those Subjects to Students
- o Teachers are Responsible for Managing and Monitoring Student Learning
- o Teachers Think Systematically about Their Practice and Learn from Experience

Required Text

Mertler, C. A. (2013). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators*, 4th Ed.
Los Angeles, CA: Sage

Online Resources

Blackboard:

- Sample Action Research Projects
- Outlines for writing up each Stage of the ARP Process
- Collaborate – virtual office hours & team meetings (without travel)

Mertler Book: <http://www.sagepub.com/mertler4e/>

- Action Research Mentor App
- Author's Video Clips, including messages from actual Action Researchers
- Author's Blog
- Sample Action Research Reports, Annotated Action Research Reports
- Action Research Portraits – examples at each stage of the Action Research process following the same two projects in every chapter
- Developmental Templates for Planning each stage of the AR process
- Chapter Resources – e-Flashcards (terminology), self-quizzes, PowerPoint slides for each chapter, chapter summaries, additional web resources, selected journal articles on Action Research

Teacher Research Websites

http://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/tr_action/ (GMU teacher research site)

<http://www.accessexcellence.org/LC/TL/AR/> (teacher research site)

<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ntrp/> (UK teacher research site)

<http://www.teacherresearch.net/> (international teacher research site)

More Action Research Textbooks

Each starred () textbook below has at least 2 sample Action Research reports in it.*

Alber, S.M. (2011). *A toolkit for action research*. Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield. (lots of sample data collection tools & data analysis display formats)

Dana, N. F. & D. Yendol-Hoppey. (2014). *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

*Hendricks, C. (2009). 2nd ed. *Improving schools through action research*. Columbus, OH: Pearson.

*Holly, M.L., J.M. Arhar & W.C. Kasten. (2008). *Action research for teachers: Traveling the yellow brick road*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

James, E. A., M. T. Milenkiewicz, & A. Bucknam. (2008). *Participatory action research for educational leadership: Using data-driven decision making to improve schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

*Johnson, A. P. (2011). 4th ed. *A short guide to action research*. Boston: Pearson.

McNiff, J. & A.J. Whitehead. (2009). *Doing and writing action research*. London: Sage Ltd.

*Mills, G. E. (2010). 4th ed. *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

*Moore, R. A. (2004). *Classroom research for teachers: A practical guide*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.

*Reason, P. & H. Bradbury-Huang. (2007). *The SAGE handbook of action research: Participative inquiry & practice*. London: Sage Ltd.

*Schmuck, R. A. (2006). 2nd ed. *Practical action research for change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. (contains illustrative case studies)

*Stringer, E. T. (2007). 3rd ed. *Action research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Course Requirements

| Assignment | Grade % | Standards Addressed |
|---|----------------|---|
| Attendance & Class Participation | 20 | GMU I, II |
| Draft Literature Reviews | 10 | TC I, II; |
| Collaborative Design Project | 20 | GMU I, II, III; TC I, II; NBPTS 2, 3, 4 |
| Inquiry/Action Research Paper | 50 | GMU I, II; TC I; NBPTS 3 |
| | | |

Each written assignment will be uploaded to Blackboard and a paper copy submitted to the instructor by the due date.

GRADING POLICY

At George Mason University course work is measured in terms of quantity and quality. A credit normally represents one hour per week of lecture or recitation or not fewer than two hours per week of laboratory work throughout a semester. The number of credits is a measure of quantity. The grade is a measure of quality. The university-wide system for grading graduate courses is as follows:

| Grade | GRADING | Grade Points | Interpretation |
|--------------|----------------|---------------------|---|
| A+ | =100 | 4.00 | Represents mastery of the subject through effort beyond basic requirements |
| A | 94-99 | 4.00 | |
| A- | 90-93 | 3.67 | |
| B+ | 85-89 | 3.33 | Reflects an understanding of and the ability to apply theories and principles at a basic level |
| B | 80-84 | 3.00 | |
| C* | 70-79 | 2.00 | Denotes an unacceptable level of understanding and application of the basic elements of the course |
| F* | <69 | 0.00 | |

Note: "C" is not satisfactory for a licensure course; "F" does not meet requirements of the Graduate School of Education

HONOR CODE & INTEGRITY OF WORK

Integrity of Work: TCLDEL students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code (<http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/>). The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated as such.

Violations of the Honor Code include:

1. Copying a paper or part of a paper from another student (current or past);
2. Reusing work that you have already submitted for another class (unless express permission has been granted by your current professor **before** you submit the work);
3. Copying the words of an author from a textbook or any printed source (including the Internet) or closely paraphrasing without providing a citation to credit the author. For examples of what should be cited, please refer to: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02/>
4. You may also not “reuse” fieldwork hours. Each placement must have 20 documented hours that are solely for each course that you are in; you may be at the same site, but the same hours may not be counted towards the same course.

LATE WORK POLICY

At the graduate level all work is expected to be of high quality and submitted on the dates due. Work submitted late will be reduced one letter grade for every day of delay. Because we live in uncertain times, if you have any extraordinary circumstances (*think* flood, earthquake, evacuation) that prevent you from submitting your work in a timely manner, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor as soon as possible after the circumstances occur and make arrangements to complete your work. *It is up to the discretion of the instructor to approve the late/makeup work.*

LAPTOP/CELL PHONE POLICY

Laptop use is permitted at the discretion of the instructor and for specific purposes as assigned in the class (e.g. small group work). Laptops will be closed during discussions, lectures and other assignments in class which require your full attention. Cell phones must be turned off/silenced during class periods. Cell phones may be used during break.

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

Class Schedule

| Week # & Date | Topics | Readings to be discussed this week |
|------------------|---|---|
| 1 9/3 | What is Action Research? Models of Action Research. Group dynamics: Practical aspects of collaboration, member roles. Brainstorming possible research topics. Objectives of this course. Course requirements. Extensive online resources. | <i>Mertler, Ch. 1</i> |
| 2 9/10 | Overview of Action Research process: 4 Stages, 9 Steps. Cyclical nature of the AR process. Planning - identifying and narrowing down your focus. Searching web sites for related literature. Reviewing the literature and organizing your literature review. <i>Individual & Team Work Session. Sample Action Research Project A.</i> | <i>Mertler, Chs. 2 & 3 Appendices A & C, pp. 295-99</i> |
| 3 9/17 | Developing a research plan. Qualitative & quantitative research. Case studies to descriptive and comparative designs. From topic to research question – how to. Ethical considerations. <i>Individual & Team Work Session. Sample Action Research Project B.</i> Deadline: Stage 1 -Draft Literature Review #1. | <i>Mertler, Ch. 4 Appendices B & C, p. 300</i> |
| 4 9/24 | Developing a data collection plan. Data sources - qualitative & quantitative data collection techniques. Formative & summative classroom assessments. Triangulation of data. <i>Individual & Team Work Session. Sample Action Research Project - Mason.</i> | <i>Mertler, Ch. 5 Appendix C, p. 301</i> |
| 5 10/1 | Triangulation Matrix. Determining data collection tools. Validity & Reliability. <i>Individual & Team Work Session.</i> Deadline: Stage 1 - Draft Literature Review #2. | <i>Mertler, Ch. 5</i> |
| 6 10/8 | Revising Data Collection Tools. <i>Individual & Team Work Session.</i> | |
| 7 10/15 | <i>Individual & Team Work Session.</i> Deadline: Draft of Stage 2, Part 1: Data Collection Plan. | |
| 8 10/22 | Data analysis. Finding patterns in the data. Descriptive statistics. <i>Individual & Team Work Session.</i> Mid-Term Feedback Forms. | <i>Mertler, Ch. 6 Appendix C, p. 302</i> |
| 9 10/29 | Data Tables: Showing Data Results. Data analysis – Interpreting the data. Reporting the data. <i>USING EXCEL to analyze your data.</i> | <i>Mertler, Ch. 6</i> |

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|----|-------|--|--|
| 10 | 11/5 | More on Data Tables & Analysis. <i>Individual & Team Work Session.</i> | |
| 11 | 11/12 | Developing an Action Plan: Reflective Practice. <i>Team Work Session.</i> | <i>Mertler, Ch. 7 Appendix C, p. 303</i> |
| 12 | 11/19 | Writing the Action Research Report – practical guidelines. Sharing and Reflecting Action Research. Making professional presentations. <i>Individual & Team Work Session.</i> Deadline: Draft of Stage 2, Part 2 - Data Analysis & Stage 3 - Action Plan. | <i>Mertler, Chs. 8 & 9</i> |
| 13 | 11/26 | No Class - Thanksgiving Holiday | |
| 14 | 12/3 | <i>Individual & Team Work Session.</i> Due today: Collaborative Design Project presentations. | |
| 15 | 12/10 | Brief, informal presentations on your Action Research Projects. <i>Course Evaluation Forms. Feedback Forms. Materials Release Forms.</i> Deadline: Final Inquiry/Action Research paper. | |

Numerous examples of Action Research Projects are presented in our course textbook and on the author's website, which includes many online resources.

In addition, you can also find Action Research Projects written by previous students in this course on our class Blackboard web site.

A number of other textbooks also include sample Action Research Projects (see P. 5 of this syllabus).

Attendance and Participation (20 %)

Graduate School of Education students are expected to attend *all* class periods of courses for which they register. Class participation – both in face-to-face and online settings – is important not only to the individual student, but to the class as a whole. Class participation is a factor in grading; instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of non-participation and as a result lower the grade as stated in the course syllabus (Mason Catalog, 2015). Participants are expected to read the assigned materials, complete on-line activities, arrive promptly, attend all class meetings for the entire session, and participate in on-line and face-to-face discussions. It is your responsibility to offer insights, questions, comments, and concerns from the readings and other course materials.

If, due to an emergency, you will not be able to participate in a given class, please contact me as soon as possible via email.

Absences and tardies will impact your grade. 4 points will be assigned to those who attend every class and participate actively. Each class missed will result in a 1 point deduction from the total. Two tardies will be equal to one absence, which will result in a 1 point deduction, and missing 3 or more class sessions will result in automatic course failure. Absences for each class, up to two classes, will result in your grade being reduced by one letter grade. Each student is allowed one free absence - will not count against you, no explanation required.

Draft Literature Review (10 %)

This assignment is intended to engage you in a thoughtful process that will help you do an exploration, as well as continue to be a critical consumer, of the education literature that relates to your action research paper.

Each participant will submit two draft literature reviews (2-3 pp, 600 – 900 words each). In each paper, participants will review and critique literature related to the research project; the readings can include artifacts such as school policies, empirical research, policy, interviews, etc.). Draft literature reviews should describe how the participant relates to the ideas of the various authors and how their ideas can *and cannot* be applied in practice. Participants should select readings that relate to their Action Research Project.

See Blackboard for more details and scoring rubric for this assignment.

Collaborative Design Project (20 %)

Working in small groups, participants will identify one authentic, alternative, preferably contemporary media-based method through which to share the results of their action research findings. While students will each make brief presentations of their individual research findings in class, the goal of this assignment is for your group to design and enact a presentation that moves the public understanding of your group members' studies. You might choose to create a collective presentation of your group members' projects or you might highlight one group

member's project and findings. You might highlight the very importance of action research or summarize the findings of your group members' efforts. You are encouraged to display these findings in an alternative setting and through creative means, with your primary goal being to demonstrate the significance of your action research to the broader world.

See Blackboard for details and scoring rubric for this project.

Inquiry/Action Research Paper (50 %)

Candidates will design and conduct an inquiry/action research project that is relevant to their present or future teaching positions. You will write a literature review and proposal for this project, collect and analyze preliminary data, and share the results of your study with both our class (and potentially an outside audience) in a Power Point presentation.

Both pre- and in-service teachers must complete the project. It is possible to partner with another student for the purpose of sharing data and different aspects of a common topic; each partner, however, must submit an original, stand-alone report. Each participant will also make a 10-12 minute presentation (ungraded) of her/his project, time permitting. Please note that projects and papers submitted for credit in another course cannot also be used for a grade in this course. With instructor approval, however, participants may build on a research topic.

Your data sources for this project must include combinations of the following artifacts:

- 1) visual representations (images or photos of your classroom, students at work, etc.)
- 2) student feedback related to your research questions and your teaching intervention
- 3) quotes from interviews conducted with stakeholders in your project (parents, colleagues, students)
- 4) student work samples

See Blackboard for detailed instructions and scoring rubric on this project.

Scoring Rubric

Inquiry/Action Research Paper

Name:

Date:

Score:

| CRITERIA | Beginning (Does not meet standards) 1 | Developing (Meets standards) 2 | Accomplished (Exceeds standards) 3 | Exemplary (Exceeds standards) 4 |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Imagination and Creativity (GMU I, TC II) | Beginning to take risks beyond what is familiar | Generates multiple possibilities before attempting to solve problems creatively | Creative problem- solving technique includes multiple possibilities, research, divergent and convergent thinking, and tenacity | Metacognitive and innovative thinking and practice derived from creative problem solving that sparks more questions, possibilities, and creativity for self and students. Overcomes social and material obstacles |
| Theorizing/Praxis (GMU I, TC II, NBPTS 3) | Beginning to question own thinking about pedagogy <i>or</i> practice | Questions own thinking about pedagogy <i>and</i> practice | Consistently questions own thinking about pedagogy and practice w/ students & families, seeks research texts & studies, and applies theories to shape practice | Metacognitively synthesizes own and others' theories, hypotheses, and research and connects them to practice and uses practice to test theory |
| Content Depth (GMU III, TC II, NBPTS 2, NETS-T1,2,3,4,5) | Demonstrates uneven skill and knowledge about the disciplines and practices that you present | Demonstrates skill and knowledge about the trends, theories, or disciplinary practices in education | Demonstrates skill and knowledge about the trends, controversies, theories, and disciplinary practices in teaching and effectively applies skills and knowledge to create critical, imaginative, and creative thinking for all students. | Demonstrates critical metacognition about skill and knowledge on the trends, trends, theories, and disciplinary practices in teaching and learning and effectively applies skills and knowledge to create critical, imaginative, creative, and relevant multicultural curricula for all students. |

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|---|--|---|--|---|
| Research skills and impact on practice (GMU II, TC 1, NBPTS 4) | Demonstrates minimal understanding of the research process and potential impact on practice. | Demonstrates clear understanding of the research process and potential impact on practice. | Demonstrates clear understanding of the research process and potential impact on practice; demonstrates imaginative, creative, and critical thought about some aspect of the research process. | Demonstrates clear understanding of the research process and potential impact on practice; demonstrates imaginative, creative, and critical thought in all aspects of the research process. |
| Literature Review | No literature review included | At least 5 relevant sources are reviewed; however there is little synthesis of information from the sources | At least 7 relevant sources are reviewed and there is adequate synthesis of information from the sources | More than 7 relevant sources are reviewed and there is a sophisticated synthesis of information from the sources with strong connections to their own research project |
| Elements of the Research Report | Fails to address all required elements of the report. | Minimally addresses all elements of the research report. | Adequately addresses all elements of the research report. | Thoughtfully addresses all elements of the research report. |

Comments