

## **EDUC 615x - Practitioner Inquiry for Holyoke M.Ed Program**

Spring 2003

Thursday 3:30 – 6:30

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Practitioner Research is an extension of what all good practitioners (teachers, administrators, curriculum specialists, materials developers, teacher educators) do- that is, they critically examine their practice, make changes based on what they find out and talk to others (formally and informally) about what they've learned. The purpose of your research project is to better understand how learning occurs in your classroom. We expect that this process will lead you to begin to examine your practice in a more systematic and focused way than you might do otherwise. One of the ironies is that once you become engaged in research, you'll no longer see the distinction between research and teaching. As with all research, you will develop questions, collect and analyze data and write about what you've found out. This course provides support for doing your own research (i.e., exploring and applying different kinds of data collection in your classrooms), but the project must come from your own questions about your practice. Data collection and analysis will continue throughout the program with the final research project completed in the final semester of the program. At the end of this semester, we expect that you will have a baseline description of learning in your current classroom and developed a first draft research plan for the master's project. The baseline descriptions will help you track how your teaching has changed over time and help UMASS faculty to modify their teaching to fit the realities of your classroom.

### **GOALS OF THE COURSE**

1. To explore reflective inquiry as professional development.
2. To develop skills in conducting practitioner inquiry.
3. To reflect on and change ones own practice through the inquiry process.
4. To engage in a careful examination of the practices that promote student learning.
5. To gain confidence in providing leadership to the broader school and professional community about the direction of education in general and nature of student learning specifically.

## REQUIREMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS

The major requirements for this course, due on June 19, include the following:

- a) A portfolio that includes class assignments, field notes, baseline data you collect and a summary statement (3 to 5 pages) that answers the question “What does learning look like in my classroom and what changes do I imagine will take place as a result of the ELL policy changes?” Baseline data can include, but are not limited to: (1) video footage of short interactions in the classroom (with interpretation of them), (2) field note entries about incidents in class, (3) interviews of students or parents, (4) an inventory or survey, (5) photographs, (6) artifacts or any other kind of student’s work. There are no specific requirements for the format of your portfolio. Basically, it should be presented in the format that is more convenient for you and the kind of data you’ve collected.
- b) A first draft plan of the master’s research you will conduct over the course of your program.
- c) An annotated bibliography of at least 5 references- these can include conceptual or theoretical position papers, empirical research reports, teacher-research projects, research reviews, case studies, and even novels if they help you to conceptualize your study. The idea of this assignment is to tie your proposed research question (s) to the current literature on the topic and to develop your library research skills.

Ongoing assignments include common readings (chapters in the required textbook), locating and reading articles on your topic, keeping field notes and completing weekly assignments (see the schedule).

**The course is offered as a PASS/FAIL.** To receive a pass, you must complete all of the assignments outlined above and participate in class discussions. If you are unable to complete all of the assignments by June 19<sup>th</sup>, you may take an incomplete. The incomplete will become an F if you have not submitted your work by the beginning of September.

Your final research project will be presented to the Holyoke School District Community at the end of the program and become part of your Master’s Portfolio. Each course you take in the program will enable to refine your projects further and you will submit a revised research plan at the end of each semester.

## READINGS

The required textbook is 1) Hubbard, R.S. & Power, B. & M. (1999) Living the Questions: A guide for teacher-researchers. York, ME: Stenhouse. As you already know, You can order directly from the

publishers: Stenhouse Publishers <http://www.stenhouse.com/0081.htm>. In addition, you can read the whole book from this URL too.

## SCHEDULE

- April 10:** **Providing an overview** of the course, discussing chapter 1, arranging small study groups, answering questions about assignments and projects, unpacking the notion “testing your assumptions” and “what counts as learning?”
- April 17:** **Formulating Research Questions.** To prepare revisit Chapter 1, read Chapter 2 in Hubbard and one teacher research report. Bring a brief description of your site and possible sub questions (for the major question “What does learning look like in my classroom?) Also bring possible research questions for Master’s Research Project (which will be based partly on how you think the new policy context will change what you are doing in your classroom). Make with copies for a small group (5 copies). Use the chart on page 28 “How to Refine Questions” to guide your questions.
- April 24:** **Public school vacation (No class)**
- May 1:** **Developing Research Plans.** To prepare read Chapter 3 in Hubbard and one teacher research report. Using examples from the text book, develop a draft research plan on your own (for your masters project- e.g. how would you like to focus your master’s project on learning in your classroom). This doesn’t have to be perfect and it will be revised many times over the next three years. We will examine assumptions behind the questions you are proposing and explore ways that we can “test” those assumptions and imagine the questions one might ask if their assumptions differed and under different policy contexts. Also bring a draft of your permission slip and skim Chapter 4.
- May 8:** **Collecting Data:** To prepare read Chapter 4 in Hubbard and one teacher research report.  
**We will talk about what needs to be systematically described to understand classrooms, how to focus on learning, contextual factors that shape learning and how different “theories” about classrooms and learning affect description.** In addition, we will talk about how busy teachers manage data collection and create time to process the data. (We’ll form groups with different data analysis methods for group presentations on May 22nd).
- May 15:** **Project Meetings and using available technology to help you in the process:** To prepare read chapter 10 in Hubbard. Meet with your research

partner (s) and share your revised research plan. If you decide to use your students as research partners, include how you will work with students in your revised plan. Bring a sample of your field notes to share with the class. We will also have a hands-on workshop on technology use for data collection purposes

- May 22:** **Doing Data Analysis:** To prepare read Chapter 5 in Hubbard and teacher research report. Choose one kind of data analysis method (narratives, codes, visual markers and memos, semantic domain analysis, and sociograms). Collect samples of data that illustrate the corresponding analysis method. Try out the procedures on small bits of data and bring the analyzed samples to class.
- May 29:** **Reading the Literature (The first part of the class will be a workshop on resources available in the Umass library and online. Possibly conducted by a reference librarian):** To prepare read Chapter 6 in Hubbard. Based on the data you're collecting, and the possible questions you are proposing for your master's project, write a topic statement. List key words you will use to search the literature. Begin your library research and revise key words based on your preliminary work. Be sure to document your steps in locating literature in your journals and be prepared to share your efforts with the class.
- June 5:** **Interpreting Data - Reading to Write up Research:** Skim chapter 7 in Hubbard. Read one of the sample research articles (To be provided). Talk about how the sample research articles were put together and whether (why or why not) they were convincing to you. Bring to class a sample of data from your current classroom, your analysis of that data and a statement of interpretation of the analysis with enough copies for your study group.
- June 12:** **Marshaling Evidence:** Based on your work so far, write a story line that answers the question "What does learning look like in my classroom and how does it differ from your original assumptions about what was taking place in your classroom? How will your classrooms have to change to accommodate the new ELL policies?" Think of this story line as a hypothesis and what would constitute convincing evidence for your story line. Bring your storyline & evidence you have for that storyline and additional evidence you think you would need to be convincing.
- June 19:** **Review of Course Concepts, Course Evaluation, & Presentation of Research Plans for the Master's project.** To prepare revise your draft research plans for the masters project and prepare your portfolios for submission. In class we will talk about how you believe your classrooms will have to change to accommodate the new ELL policies? And what you will need to collect /and how for next year's data collection.