

EDUC 615X Practitioner Inquiry for Springfield Teachers

Spring 2005

Thursdays, 3:30 to 6:30 pm

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INTRODUCTION

Research in education is used by teachers, parents, students, administrators, university professors, politicians, the business community, the general public, and others in many ways and for many purposes. As “research” can carry multiple meanings and connotations for how teachers teach and students learn, the following questions are important in interrogating some of the meanings attached to the term “educational research.”

“What counts as educational research?”

“Who gets to do research on education?”

“How is educational research used for curriculum and instruction?” “Who decides?”

“Who cares about research in education?”

In this class we will explore the role of research in relation to the lives of teachers and their students in the Springfield Public Schools. “Why should teachers think about questions involving research in relation to their work?” “Why should teachers consider doing their own classroom-based research?” “How does practitioner inquiry intersect with the practices of teaching?” As teachers in the class begin to research their own teaching, the essential question of the course becomes:

What does it mean for teachers in the Springfield Public Schools to take an inquiry stance on their own practice?

The main focus of this class is for Springfield teachers to investigate one genre of educational research – practitioner research -- in which they become familiar with the tools and purposes of doing their own classroom-based inquiry as a “way of teaching” and explore other uses of the knowledge they generate through this inquiry (such as providing data to administrators and/or parents about student learning). This is also the first class in the ACCELA master’s sequence. The dispositions and research practices begun with this class will provide a framework for more focused inquiry into the teaching of English Language Learners and classroom language practices as the program continues.

GOALS OF THE COURSE

1. To explore reflective inquiry as professional development and simultaneously as a “way of teaching.”
2. To develop skills in conducting practitioner inquiry.
3. To reflect on and change one’s 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.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Hubbard, R.S. & Power, B. & M. (1999) Living the Questions: A guide for teacher-researchers. York, ME: Stenhouse. You can order directly from the publishers: Stenhouse Publishers <http://www.stenhouse.com/0081.htm>. In addition, you can access the book’s activities from this URL too.

Wilhelm, J. (1997). *"You gotta be the book" :Teaching engaged and reflective reading with adolescents*. New York: Teachers College Press/Newark:NCTE available from NCTE: <http://www.ncte.org/store/books/reading/105766.htm> and may be found discounted at <http://www.half.com>

REQUIREMENTS/ASSIGNMENTS

The major requirements for the course, due on March 31, 2005, include the following:

- 1) A research portfolio that includes class assignments, field notes, baseline data you collect and a summary statement (3 to 5 pages).

Baseline data may include (but is not limited to):

- a) video footage of short interactions in the classroom (along with interpretation of them)
- b) field notes entries about incidents/events in class
- c) interviews with students, parents, administrators, others
- d) an inventory or survey
- e) photographs
- f) artifacts or any other examples of students’ work

Summary statement should address the following questions:

“What does learning look like in my classroom?”

“What questions do I have about English language learners in my classroom?”

“What changes am I considering based on my research so far?”

“What are possible areas of interest and potential research tools that I imagine will be part of the design of future inquiry projects in the program?”

- 2) An annotated bibliography of at least 5 references pertaining to your evolving questions. This may include: theoretical position papers, empirical research reports, teacher-research projects, research reviews, case studies, and even fiction or non-fiction literature 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.
- 3) Ongoing assignments include common readings (chapters in the required textbooks, articles provided by the instructor), locating and reading articles on your topic, keeping field notes in your classroom, completing weekly assignments (see schedule).

Suggested ways to prepare for class discussion of readings:

Since the readings will form the basis of our discussion, each class member will need to prepare for these discussions weekly in some way such as writing notes in the margins of the book, using post-its to mark particular pages, or writing reflective journal entries on the readings. In some cases, you will be asked to write reflective responses [*one page, single space*] to particular readings and these entries go into your portfolio along with any other reflective entries that you choose to write.

GRADING

This course is offered pass/fail. To receive a pass, you must complete all of the assignments outlined above, attend class, and participate in class discussions. This is an inquiry based course rather than a lecture course. Therefore, group work is essential to the success of the group and the classes are planned based on preparation by the instructor and the students. Class sessions are working sessions that will require you to bring reading responses or data to be shared in small and large groups therefore it is vital that all involved participate and prepare for each session.

If for any reason you are unable to complete the portfolio and bibliography by March 31st, you may take an incomplete. However, the incomplete will become an F if you have not submitted your work by the middle of the following semester.

Finally, this is the beginning of an ongoing inquiry process that will continue throughout the ACCELA master's program. You will present your final research to the Springfield District Community at the end of the program. This will also become part of your Master's portfolio. The inquiry projects you complete at each stage of your coursework will be used to refine your projects further and you will submit a revised research plan at the end of each semester. Also, in subsequent courses, your inquiry projects may serve as pre-practicum opportunities for licensure.

PROJECT ASSISTANTS

A project assistant will be assigned to every teacher. The assistant will visit your classroom for about an hour every other week to assist in collecting data, which will include video/audio recordings, field notes, photographs, scanning student work, and other documents (e.g. relevant page in a textbook that provides context for that work). The assistant will be available by email or by phone when you need a critical friend to help you develop your project. Data collected will become part of the ACCELA database and may be used to answer a variety of different questions, although permission will be sought before anything is used in a public form (outside the ACCELA learning community). Many of the project assistants will use their data for their own research, again with the express permission to do so. In some cases, teachers and project assistants may choose to collaborate on research projects, but in other cases the teacher and project assistant may have different foci. In either case, the project assistant should not do the analysis and interpretation FOR you.

CLASS AS A RESEARCH SITE

As a practitioner researcher myself, I routinely collect, analyze, and interpret data as it concerns my courses. This allows me to improve my teaching as well as add to the body of knowledge we know about inquiry-based teaching and literacy learning. For purposes of this research, for the ACCELA project archives, and possibly for our own use later in the semester, each class will be either video- or audio-recorded. I and the ACCELA project faculty are available to answer any questions you have about this process and the uses of the data outside of ACCELA learning community.

COURSE SCHEDULE

See Attached

RESOURCES

<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/lesson-plans/lesson-6396.html> Guide to citing resources from the internet

http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca/main_mcdowell/current/wasom_ellam.htm Research into Teacher Research

http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/research/sd/4.1_final.html#sample Teacher Research Communities as context for professional development

http://www.ncele.gwu.edu/miscpubs/ncrcdsll/about/3_aboutNCELA.htm National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition

<http://www.writingproject.org/pub/nwpr/quarterly/2003no2/hillskemper.html> National Writing Project “How our assumptions affect our expectations.

<http://www.writingproject.org/pub/nwpr/quarterly/2001no3/humphrey.html> Teacher Research Project on Bridging Home and School

<http://www.wam.umd.edu/~pryan/researchfestival/index.htm> Teacher Research Projects

<http://gse.gmu.edu/research/lmtip/arp/vol1.htm> More Teacher Research Projects

<http://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/TResl.shtml> ESL Teacher Research Projects

<http://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/TRcycle.shtml> Teacher Research Question Cycle

<http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ/index.html> TESL- Electronic Journal

<http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OSDT/StaffDevelopment/trn.htm> Teacher Research Network

http://www.nwrel.org/ruraled/publications/com_mapping.pdf Guide to mapping a community

<http://www.writingproject.org/pub/nwpr/quarterly/2001no3/humphrey.html> Action Research

<http://www.ed.arizona.edu/teacherresearch/#syll> Teacher Research Resources

<http://education.ucsc.edu/faculty/gwells/networks/> Networks: An On-Line Journal for Teacher Research

New Sites:

<http://education.ucdavis.edu/cress/projects/teachresearch.html> UCDavis Teacher Research Program -- connect to Windows on our Classrooms for TR projects