Action Research
(3 units)

Jeff Hittenberger, Ph.D.
hittenbergerj@evangel.edu
Office Hours: M-F 9-5 (Call for appointment)
Office Location: AB II – 201; Phone 865-2815 ext 8559

Course Syllabus

Course Description

This course enables graduate students in Education to become acquainted with the literature on educational research methodologies, and to develop an understanding of such methodology in light of assessment and instruction. The goal is to not only to become a critical reader of research reports, but also a consumer and producer of educational research. The Action Research process for improving teaching and learning in classrooms at all levels is explored. Students will use the model to develop and conduct research and use the data to answer significant questions about individual or collective student learning concerns or issues.

INTERSTATE SCHOOL LEADERS LICENSURE CONSORTIUM (ISLLC) STANDARDS:

Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Knowledge:
Learning goals in a pluralistic society
Information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies

Dispositions:
The educability of all
Continuous school improvement
A willingness to continuously examine one’s own assumptions, beliefs, and practices

Performances:
Assessment data related to student learning are used to develop school vision and goals
Barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed

**Standard 2:** A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

**Knowledge:**
- Curriculum design, implementation, evaluation, and refinement
- Adult learning and professional development models

**Dispositions:**
- Student learning as the fundamental purpose of schooling
- The proposition that all students can learn
- The variety of ways in which students can learn
- Life long learning for self and others
- Professional development as an integral part of school improvement

**Performances:**
- Professional development promotes a focus on student learning consistent with the school vision and goals
- Barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed
- Curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs are designed, implemented, evaluated and refined
- Curricular decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies
- A variety of sources of information are used to make decisions

**Objectives**

By the end of this semester, you will be able to:

1. Design and implement an action research project.
2. Understand the relationship between research and theory.
3. Understand the use of disciplined inquiry to improve learning and teaching.
4. Collect, analyze, and use data for educational purposes.
5. Critically evaluate and use the research of others.
6. Use action research to support efforts related to accreditation, teacher supervision, and staff development

**Key Essential Questions:**

- What good is educational research?
- How can I do educational research?
How can I use research and draw upon theory to strengthen students’ learning?
Can I really do this if I’m not a math expert or a statistician?
How does educational research and theory inform educational practice?

Key Enduring Understandings:

- Humans seek to understand and to solve problems. This God-given gift is at the heart of research.
- Disciplined inquiry, the basis for educational research, provides educators with tools to better understand and serve their students.
- Contemporary educators do not have to reinvent the wheel. An effective educator draws upon the ideas, theories, and research developed by educators through centuries of trying to help students learn.
- Educators (and other thinkers) can evaluate various claims and examine the credibility of the evidence in order to make their own decisions about what is true, meaningful, and useful.

Key Performance Task:

**ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSAL AND FINAL REPORT PRESENTATION**

- Each student will develop an Action Research Proposal with a title page, table of contents, introduction, review of literature, methodology, references and appendices (as needed). See Gay, pages 528-538 for model.
- Role of Partner: to give constructive feedback on all drafts. You will choose or be matched with a partner by week 2.
- Expectations and requirements of the Action Research Proposal project will be reviewed in class.
- Each student will participate in an oral presentation of their proposal.
- See course syllabus for dates for section drafts; hand in all previous drafts along with revised chapter.
- **February 22-March 1** - Project Proposal Presentations (prepare powerpoint presentation for class members). **Title Page, Table of Contents, Introduction, Review of Literature, Methodology, References, Appendices, Time Line for implementation**
- **April 26** - Final Action Research Report and Presentations Due (bound and fully edited) including a section on Results and a section on Discussion/Action Plans.
Textbooks

Required:


Recommended Resources:


Professional Expectations

- As a graduate student, you are expected to attend each class session promptly, prepared with completed readings and assignments prior to class session.
- The format of the course will be based on a combination of lecture, seminar, and group activities. The assumption is that you will be prepared to participate and benefit from all formats of learning.
- You are expected to collaborate with study partners outside of class for mutual reinforcement of class assignments and readings.
- Please contact me at any time with questions or if you need clarification of any kind. I consider myself your partner and coach in this learning process. We will be learning together! Email is the easiest way to communicate with me, but feel free to stop by my office or call at any time.

Evaluation

Semester evaluation will be based on overall class performance: participation, preparation, completion of assignments, examinations, and semester project.

Your grade in this course will be determined as follows:

90%+ earned of total points possible: A
80-89% earned of total: B
70-79% earned of total: C
60-69% earned of total: D
Below 60%: F
Scores earned in the upper or lower portions of these ranges may receive a + or a – with the base letter grade.

**Topics and Assignments**

The design of this course is dynamic. Topics and readings may shift on the calendar based on your needs and our consensus decisions. Ample notice will be given for timeline revision.

**Session 1**  January 11: *What is educational research? What is Action Research? What is your experience with educational research?*

**Topics:** Introductions; Syllabus; Essential Questions; Calendar; Introduction to educational research; The search for understanding; The Scientific Method; Epistemology and modes of inquiry; Relationship between research and theory; Action Research models and your final project.

**Assignments to Submit:**
None

**Session 2**  January 18

**Topics:** Research and theory; Qualitative and Quantitative research methods; Action Research Rubric; Samples of Action Research topics and projects; Sources of research topics; Criteria for a good topic; Selecting a problem; Problem statements; Stating quantitative research topics; Research questions; Christian worldview and educational research (Marsden)

**Readings to be Discussed:**
Gay and Arisian, pages 4-6
Sagor, chapter 1
Marsden, chapter 4

**Assignment to be Submitted:**
Reflections on Marsden
Responses to Sagor and Gay
Session 3  January 25  
**Topics:** Types of Research (Posters); Reviewing your problem; Reviewing your questions; Literature review (criteria and models); Library and online resources; Christian worldview and educational research

**Readings to be Discussed:**  
Gay and Arisian, pages 6-17  
Sagor, chapters 2-3

**Assignments to be Submitted:**  
Proposed topic; Draft problem statement; Draft research question

Session 4  February 1  
**Topics:** The research proposal/plan; Literature review, continued. Connection of Action Research with Continuous Quality Improvement models; Library and online research resources review; APA review; The writing process; Hypotheses; Variables; Feedback on topics and problem statements

**Readings to be Discussed:**  
Sagor, chapter 4  
Gay and Arisian, pages 56-61, 122-125

**Assignments to be Submitted:**  
Introduction Section Draft  
Reflection on readings  
Titles of five to seven articles  
Name of one person with expertise in your area of interest whom you can interview.

Session 5  February 8  
**Topics:** Introduction to using SPSS or Excel: Action Research Data Collection and Analysis

**Readings to be Discussed:**  
Sagor, chapter 5  
Cronk, chapters 1-2

**Assignments to be Submitted:**  
Reflections on readings
Session 6  February 15
Qualitative Research Data Collection and Analysis; Selecting measuring instruments; Validity and reliability; Review of AR Proposal chapter 1

Readings to be Discussed:
Gay and Arisian, pp. 125-141
Sagor, chapter 6

Assignments to be Submitted:
Introductino draft 2 including Literature Review and Hypothesis

Session 7  February 22
Topics: Building a data collection plan. Initial presentation of draft proposals.

Readings to be Discussed:
Sagor, chapter 7

Assignments to be Submitted:
Response to readings

Session 8  March 1
Topics: Presentations of draft proposals

Readings to be Discussed:

Assignments to be Submitted:
Completed Action Research proposal, including References

Session 9  March 8
Topics: Using SPSS Part II; Action Research project implementation; data collection and analysis

Readings to be Discussed:
Sagor, chapter 8
Cronk, chapters 3-6

Assignment to be Submitted:
Session 10  March 15
Topics: Analyzing educational research

Readings to be Discussed:
Hittleman and Simon, pp. 165-179
Sagor, chapter 9

Assignment to be Submitted:
Report on data collection so far.

Session 11  March 22
Topics: Inferential Statistics; t-tests using SPSS; Reporting and sharing action research

Readings to be Discussed:
Gay, chapter 12
Sagor, chapter 10

Assignment to be Submitted:
Report on data collected over first two weeks.

Session 12  March 29
Topics: Data Analysis/Instrumentation; Statistical/Non-Statistical; The School as a Learning Organization

Readings to be Discussed:
Sagor, chapter 11

Assignment to be Submitted:
First draft of Findings/Results Section

Session 13  April 5
Topics: Preparing for Action Research Oral Presentation

Readings to be Discussed:

Assignments to be Submitted:
Session 14  April 12  
**Topic:** Surveys and Evaluation Research

Session 15  April 19  
**Topic:** Presentations of Action Research Project Reports

Session 16  April 26  Complete Presentations; Submit final projects
Bio and Response Sheet for ED 509:

Name: 

Email Address: 

Phone: 

School: 

District: 

Grade level or subject(s): 

Years of full-time teaching experience: 

Research Experience (Scale of 1 to 4; 1 would indicate that you are very experienced, in that you have taken a statistics course, carried out a research study, perhaps majored in a social science area; 4 would indicate that you have little to no experience with research). Please specify and describe your experiences.

Indicate if you have previously learned to use the SPSS program or some other statistical package.

Indicate your level of proficiency on Excel (or another spreadsheet program) and how you have used it.

Quickwrite (use the back of this sheet):

How are you feeling about embarking on this journey to become a teacher-researcher?