UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
EDTE J712
Introduction to Action Research
August 24 – December 14, 2009

On campus: August 29 and November 14, 2009 from 9 a.m. – 12 noon, Wardlaw, 109.
On-line: August 24, September 7, 14, 21, 28, October 5, 12, 26, November 2, 9, 30, December 14.

I. Descriptive Information:

A. Course Number and Title:
   EDTE J712 Introduction to Action Research
B. Bulletin Description: A systematic study, using action research methodology, of a
   significant question or issue related to teaching at the grades K-12 level.
C. Course Credit:
   Three (3) graduate credit hours.
D. Prerequisites:
   EDTE 710 Developing as a Professional Educator
   EDTE 711 Issues and Ideas in Education.
   EDRM 700 or equivalent
E. Intended Audience: Certified teachers and candidates in the Ed.S. or M.Ed. in
   Teaching Program
F. Instructor: Pamela Jewett, Ph.D.
   Wardlaw 205
   jewett@gwm.sc.edu
   777-2055

II. Statement of Learning Outcomes:

Course Goals: Participants in this course will explore action research in theory and
practice in relation to teaching in public schools. Participants will make connections
between their theoretical understandings of research and their own emergence as practitioner
researchers in educational settings. Teachers will view themselves as producers of
knowledge who can learn about their teaching and the learning of their diverse students' by
studying their own experiences. They will have an opportunity to identify a problem in their
practice, make a plan, gather and analyze data as they carry it out, report results, and develop
implications for their future teaching practice and action research. This class will serve as a
foundation for EDTE 713.

Objectives: The graduate students will:
• Explore action research in theory and practice by reading widely so as to understand
  and use core concepts and findings from action research literature in their field
• Conduct an action research project
• Keep an action-research journal of observations in their educational settings
• Reflect on the ethics of action research
• Use data collection and analysis methods appropriate to action research
• Participate in a research community as they grow in their understanding of action
  research, reflect on their research project and the research projects of others.
III. Required Textbooks and Articles

**Required texts:** To explore educational theory and practice about action research, students will read from:


**Required articles and chapters:** To extend educational theory and become more aware of the political nature of action research, you will read from articles posted on Blackboard that address the theoretical underpinnings of action research as well as articles that give examples of action research in practice. As you define your specific research question, you will also find action/teacher research articles that explore issues related to your research.

IV. Academic Course Requirements and Assessments

**A. Participation: Preparation, professional growth, and contributing to the growth of others and the community (15 points):**

1. Preparation: Online and in-class participation/communication with instructor and colleagues is essential for the success of the course and growth of the participant. While participation styles will vary, preparation for and active participation in class and small group discussions are essential to the learning process. Full participation will require careful reading of the articles and books for on-line discussions so that you can share your thoughts and reflections on readings. The learning process happens not only through your reflection on the readings but also through discussion with colleagues and further reflection.

2. Professional growth: I believe that learners are ultimately responsible for their own learning and that professional educators learn for a lifetime. Thus, this course requires participants to completing all assignments on-time, commit to reading, interacting, experiencing and reflecting for the purpose of fostering their growth as an educator.

3. Contributing to the growth of others: In addition, critical to all learning is the ability to support the growth of others. Thus, each participant is required to spend time thoughtfully considering how s/he supports the growth of that community and the growth of each colleague within that community. Consider questions such as: What stance/approach/attitude are you using to promote the evolution of a community of learners in our on-line class? What are you doing to ensure that all voices within the learning community are being heard? What challenges are you facing in supporting others as learners and how are you addressing those challenges? How are you validating colleagues for what they know now while helping them work toward “outgrowing themselves?” How are you responding to colleagues who may profess an attitude or belief system that is very different from yours? I will ask you to write about this during the semester and send it to me in an e-mail. This writing will be a portion of your participation grade.
C. Teachers’ Journal (10 points each – 30 points total): You will need to keep a teacher’s journal to help you “see” and “see again” (“search” and “re-search”) what is going on in your teaching life. You may use any format that is comfortable to you (paper journal, electronic journal, diary, etc.), but you will need to take 5-10 minutes each teaching day to reflect on what is happening in your classrooms. Ask yourself questions like (but not limited to):

- What is going on here?
- Why am I concerned about/interested in this?
- What kind of evidence can I produce to show why I am concerned/interested in this topic?
- What have I tried so far?
- How can I modify my practice in light of what I’m learning?

You will share your unfolding understandings with your research groups and with your research partner. I would also like a synopsis of your journal (in electronic format) three times, as indicated on the course calendar. Your synopsis will describe the big ideas/concerns emerging from your journal over time, what you have tried, and what you’d like to do next and will be not more than 1 double-spaced page long. You will send this to me on September 14th, October 12th, and November 14th as an e-mail attachment.

D. Synthesis of readings (25 points each – total 75 points): Three times during the semester I will ask you to synthesize your readings. In these syntheses you will analyze and bring together ideas and concepts that you have been reading about during the previous month. Synthesizing gives you the opportunity to see how or if ideas and concepts relate to each other, and in the process form new and more complex understandings about theory and practice. You will create the first synthesis with your research group and turn it in on September 28th. I will give you instructions on how to do this. You will also work with your research group to write your second synthesis and turn it in on October 26th. The third synthesis will be due on November 30th and this will be a synthesis of only the articles you’ve located and read that are related to your study. (25 points each/75 points total)

C. Research Interest Paper and Research Plans I and II (60 points each – 180 points total). You will submit a research interest paper by September 21st and research plans I and II on November 2nd and December 14th. These assignments are discussed in detail below. The purpose of these assignments is to help you reflect upon and then summarize what you have learned from your research project planning at these junctures and to help guide you to the next steps in the research process. These plans may also serve as points of discussion for your small research group meetings. Your narratives should be 3-4 pages in length, double-spaced, and should adhere to APA 6th Edition. Please respond to the specific guiding questions but do not feel constrained by the guiding questions; that is if you want to discuss other topics that have emerged as you think about your research, I encourage you to do so. (60 points each/180 total)
For your September 21st Research Interest Paper, you will write a well-crafted narrative that responds to the following questions but is not limited to the following questions:

- What aspects of your teaching and the learning of your diverse students (linguistically, culturally, and with exceptionality) are you passionately interested in learning more about, in understanding more deeply? Begin with a question you are interested in exploring.
- Why are you interested in learning more about this part of your teaching?
- What sort of data might you collect to enable you to learn more about this part of your teaching?
- How will you intentionally and systematically collect that data to help you gain a better understanding of this part of your teaching?
- When during the school day could you collect and begin to analyze (make sense of) this data?
- Who can support you with your research and how?
- What questions and concerns do you have about conducting your own study?

For your November 2nd Research Plan I, you will write a well-crafted narrative that responds to the following questions but is not limited to the following questions:

- After further reflection and discussion with your research group, what aspects of your teaching and the learning of your diverse students (linguistically, culturally, and with exceptionality) are you passionately interested in learning more about and are feasible to study? How has your question been refined?
- Why are you interested in studying this part of your teaching?
- What action will you take in your classroom? (What are you going to do?)
- At this point, what sort of data might you collect to help you answer your question?
- Who can help you with your research?
- What books, articles, on-line resources do you want to explore to better understand your research question?
- Speak to your principal about your research plans. Describe your meeting and your principal’s response to your plans.
- a) If your students are under 18 years old, attached to this document you should include two letters. One should be a letter of consent to the parents of your students asking their permission for their student to be a participant in your study. The other should be a letter of assent that you would have your students sign.
- b) If your participants are over 18 years old, you need to include a letter of consent for them to sign.
- Attached to this document you should include (1) your certificate of completions for the Human Subject tutorial (www.citiprogram.org) and (2) a copy of your district’s requirements for conducting research.
For your December 14th Research Plan II, you will write a well-crafted narrative that responds to the following questions:

- What is/are the guiding question(s) for your research project?
- Why are you interested in this/these questions and why is it/are they important to you?
- What data are you going to collect and how are you going to collect it?
- Why use this method(s) of data collection?
- How are you going to analyze your data? (What are you going to do to make sense of all the data you have collected?)
- What will be the first thing you will do after the winter break?
- Include a week-by-week time line from January through the end of the class.
- Attached to this document you will include your “Reflection on Learning”
  - What you initially believed about action research
  - What you currently believe about action research
  - What you still wonder about action research
- Attached to this document you should include a letter to your district requesting permission to conduct research. The letter should address your district’s requirements for conducting research.
- A copy of this letter should go to your principal and another copy should go to your district office.

Conceptual Framework: Essential professional tools and Collaborative Education Leader and Advocate Standards

**Essential Professional Tool 2 – Knowledge and Application of Ethical Principles:** Advanced program candidates demonstrate in-depth knowledge and thoughtful application of the Code of ethical conduct and other guidelines relevant to their professional role.

**Collaborative Education Leader and Advocate Standards:** D – Integrity; K – Standards

**Essential Professional Tool 4 – Mastery of Relevant Theory and Research:** Advanced program candidates demonstrate in-depth, critical knowledge of the theory and research relevant to the professional role(s) and focus area(s) emphasized in the program.

**Collaborative Education Leader and Advocate Standards:** D – Intellectual Spirit; K – Theory and Research

**Essential Professional Tool 6 – Inquiry Skills and Knowledge of Research Methods:** Using systematic and professionally accepted approaches, advanced program candidates demonstrate inquiry skills, showing their ability to investigate questions relevant to their practice and professional goals.

**Collaborative Education Leader and Advocate Standards:** P – engaging in Inquiry (to further personal knowledge while contributing to and promoting the profession).

V. Academic expectations and requirements:

A. Attendance:
   Students are expected to attend all class meetings. We will have two on-campus meetings, and unsatisfactory class attendance will have an impact on your final grade.

B. Utilizing Blackboard:
Utilizing Blackboard is a required component of the course. If you are unfamiliar with this medium please refer to this website for assistance (http://blackboard.sc.edu/). All assignments will be submitted via Blackboard within the “Assignments” link on our course site.

C. Late Assignments:
Students are expected to meet assignment deadlines, and I will accept assignments up through midnight of the day they are due. Any work submitted after its due date will be considered late. Late assignments will be reduced by a full grade, except in extreme cases.

Note on due dates:
Our on-line classes are scheduled for Monday afternoons, however, that is just so that we can “chunk” our work into weekly segments. With the exception of the two on-campus meetings, our work will be on-line. With that in mind, all assignments will be due by midnight the Sunday before our class is scheduled to “meet.”

D. Academic Honesty:
University policy regarding academic responsibility (Student Affairs Policy STAF 6.25) states “It is the responsibility of every student at the University of South Carolina Columbia to adhere steadfastly to truthfulness and to avoid dishonesty, fraud, or deceit of any type in connection with any academic program. Any student who violates this rule or who knowingly assists another to violate this rule shall be subject to discipline.” Students who commit an act of academic dishonesty may receive a 0.0 on the assignment or in the course. More information regarding this policy can be found in the Carolina Community: USC Student Handbook and Policy Guide at: http://www.sa.sc.edu/carolinacommunity/housing.htm#Academic%20Responsibility

E. Policies relating to students with disabilities:
Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor to discuss any accommodations needed to fulfill course requirements. In order to receive reasonable accommodations from the instructor, students must have certified eligibility through the Office of Student Disability Services. Any student with a documented disability should contact the Office of Student Disability Services at 777-6142 to make arrangements for appropriate accommodations.

F. APA Guidelines:
All written work must follow APA 6th edition guidelines (particularly focusing on page numbers, double-spacing, in-text citations, and references). Please edit your work carefully and check for spelling/typographical and grammar errors before turning it in.

VI. Evaluation and Grading
Course guidelines for grading: This course is a graded course using A, B, C, D, F. 94-100% is considered an A; 86-93% is considered a B; 78-85% is considered a C; 70-77% is considered a D; below 70% is considered an F. Students are required to complete all assignments thoroughly and professionally.

In this course you will be evaluated for the following:

- Participating (Contributing to the Growth of Others) 15 points (5%)
- Teaching Journal 30 points (10%)
Syntheses I, II, III (25 points each, 8.33% each)  75 points (25%)
Research Interest Paper 60 points (20%)
Action Research Plan I 60 points (20%)
Action Research Plan II 60 points (20%)

Total Points (300 possible points)
A = 300-280
B = 279-260
C = 259-240
D = 239-220
F < 229

VII. Major Topics of the Course
Keeping a teaching journal
What is action research
Action research in educational settings
Synthesizing readings
Observing and interpreting
Ethical issues of action research
Framing a question
Preparing a research plan
Action research for educational change
Data collection and analysis
Reviewing literature
Identifying a theoretical frame
Refining your question
Refocusing your journaling
Making your research public

VIII. Modes of Instruction – this class will meet 2 times on campus and 12 times on-line.

Mini-lessons (on-campus and on-line)
Demonstration lessons (on-campus)
Exploration of Issues and Content /Lecture (on-campus and on-line)
Small group and whole group discussions (on-campus and on-line)
Analysis of shared readings (on-line)
Collaborative presentations (on-campus presentation with on-line work)

IX. Bibliography

Articles about Action Research:


**Articles that describe Action Research studies:**

Website for action/teacher research: [http://www.teachersnetwork.org/TNLI/research/](http://www.teachersnetwork.org/TNLI/research/)


