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# Teacher as Researcher

Sample Pages



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## Course Overview

*Teacher as Researcher* is a course that offers you an opportunity to research issues in education, write a paper and share with others. Explore the arena of educational theories, policies, standards, assessments or teacher evaluation practices. Choose an educational topic you have a passion for: best practices in curriculum and instruction, content knowledge, understanding and creating curriculum to meet the Common Core, classroom management, using and applying technology in the classroom, or any specific student learning need. Perhaps you have an idea you would like to develop as a thesis. Review the literature on the topic you chose, and critically analyze the research. Present your insights in a paper or create a project. Show your research findings and analysis that support your idea and a conclusion that summarizes and synthesizes your findings. Consider sharing your research and knowledge with others. Send your paper to an educational journal for publication, teach a staff inservice or make a presentation.

Upon completion of the course, you will be able to:

1. Identify educational topics to research.
2. Choose and narrow down a topic to research.
3. Prepare a plan of study.
4. Compose a thesis statement.
5. Review the literature on the topic. “Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.” (Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Anchor Standards for Writing, 2010.)
6. Objectively analyze findings from research.
7. Write a paper or create a project “to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.” (CCSS Anchor Standards for Writing, 2010.)
8. “Use technology, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.”(CCSS Anchor Standards for Writing, 2010.)
9. Evaluate what you learned and the process of taking this course. Consider some ways you will share your research publically. Write a 2-4-page Reflection paper.
  - a. What have I learned about the content of the research and writing that is meaningful to me?
  - b. What have you learned from the process of being a ‘teacher as researcher’?
  - c. Consider some ways you will share your research publically.

This course is for YOU. Tailor designing the course work to meet your needs is invited. Please contact the instructor with your questions, modifications or ideas that will make this course more meaningful to you.

*This course meets Common Core Anchor Standards for Writing 1,2,4,5,6,7,8,9,10.*

Use the study guide, outside reading and writing activities to complete the course work.

A syllabus is available on [www.collegecoursesonline.com](http://www.collegecoursesonline.com)

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## Lesson 1- Introduction

Take a look at your bookshelf of professional books. List some of the authors. I look at mine and I see authors like Jeff Wilhelm, Ralph Fletcher, Robert Marzano, Katie Wood Ray, Lucy Calkins, and Grant Wiggins. As I list the authors, I think about the questions that invited me to read these texts. I want to know how to understand boys and literacy, how to teach writing in a way that really inspires writing, I want to know how to build curriculum and instruction that makes sense in a time driven assessment world, and how to inspire and convince others to read because it is the most valuable gift education can give. Reading these professional texts leads me to more reading, more books, more journal articles, and research on the web. I am often challenged in my beliefs and thinking. I find research exhilarating, stimulating and challenging. But, I gain the best understanding when I pause in my research, stop reading, and think. That is when I can synthesize what I learn with what I know. I assimilate best through writing. Writing forces me to articulate my thinking; to make a statement and then see if I can back it up with evidence. I review studies to find research that corroborates or disputes the thesis I start with. Often I find the research supports part of the thesis and other research gives me enough evidence to change my thinking and practices. Lastly, I apply what I learn to my teaching practice. This is the process of being a teacher who is also a researcher. It is the intent of this course, *Teacher as Researcher* to invite you to this process of being a teacher and being a researcher and participate in contributing to the professional field of education.

The professional books that you love and cherish, the ones you use time and again are most likely written by teachers. You've probably dipped into them when you are looking for new ideas, answers to questions, for new strategies to improve your teaching and ways to create a more effective learning environment. The teachers who wrote the professional books are just like you. They, too ask questions about student learning – why is one strategy working and another not? Why one student seems to get a concept, but someone else does not? The difference between you and the teacher/author you read is in the effort of writing and research. In this course you are offered the same opportunity. Choose a topic of interest. Find scholarly research. Evaluate your reading and your analysis, and then write. Once you write about a topic, you know your topic. When you put what you know into practice, you see if your thesis works in the student-learning environment. This is where you become an expert. You hone your idea. And when you share it or teach it to others, you become a master teacher.

*Teachers as Researcher* is designed to take what you do everyday and formalize it. Start by choosing a topic or question that you would like to research. It might be a question about student learning; it might be an inquiry in how to become more knowledgeable about applying or creating curriculum to meet the Common Core Standards, it might be a topic about what practices work best for a special needs student. Choose a topic you have a passion for, something that will hold your interest and energy as you read, research, evaluate, and write. In the end, you will be knowledgeable about the topic you read about and research. You will be encouraged to share what you learn with others, perhaps a few

colleagues, or team members. Perhaps you will make a presentation at a conference or to your staff or the parents of your students. You might go public by submitting an article to a newspaper, journal or professional website, or post a blog. Aim for being a resource for others who might have similar questions and inquiry.

Please give some thought to your intentions for this course. Keep in mind that this course is for you, the choice of topic, the research, the writing, the reading, the insights and the reflections you gain from your research. I am your guide and facilitator. I am here to support you in your journey as “teacher as researcher”. Choose a topic that is interesting to you, a topic that you have a passion for. The more you explore what is meaningful to you, the more you will profit from this experience. Feel free to choose a topic that is outside the scope of education. For instance, you may want to explore writing as a writer or time management strategies or technology tools. Once you’ve chosen a topic, submit your idea to the instructor. Keep the focus small. Your plan will encompass choosing a topic, choosing scholarly research to read and evaluate, and write a paper or create a project. Complete the course by writing a short reflection paper, evaluating the content and process. Please see Course Requirements in the beginning pages.

This text exercises will guide your work for the Outside Reading and Writing Assignments and the final Reflection paper. Here is an overview:

- Lesson 2 will guide you through a process for choosing a topic of study. If you already know the topic you would like to pursue, then skip the assignment in Lesson 2 and move on to Lesson 3 “Making a Plan” and writing your “Thesis Statement” in Lesson 4.
- Submit the topic, a plan and thesis statement to the instructor for “Instructor Approval.” Keep the focus of your study small. (Lesson 5).
- Once your topic receives approval, proceed to Lesson 6 “Resources” and Lesson 7 “Research Strategies”. As you read and research organize your information. Read Lesson 8 “Collecting Information.” Document the research you read for the bibliography. Annotate a minimum of 7-8 resources.
- Lesson 9 “Paper or Project” will help you decide what form you would like your presentation to take. Please choose a form that is meaningful to you. You may use MLA or APA or any standard style to format your paper. Please submit your final paper or project in a finished, easy to read format. Use a Word document, Google document, PowerPoint, or YouTube. Please see Sending Work in the beginning pages.
- Lesson 10 is the guide to the “Reflection Paper.” Reflect on what you learned that is meaningful to you personally and professionally. Evaluate your role as “teacher as researcher”. Explore the possibility of sharing your paper or project with others.

## Lesson 2- Choosing a Topic

Active teaching means being an active learner. On a daily basis, teachers interact with students assessing whether the lessons they prepare help students to learn, make corrections when needed and generate questions about how better to serve learning needs. How can I teach more effectively? How can I assess with more accuracy? How can I increase student engagement? How can I meet the diversity of student needs? How can I develop my curriculum and instruction to meet standards? How do I fit everything in? How can I manage time? How could grading be more efficient? What's important? What do I really want students to know by the end of the day, week, or year?

Active research is essential to the teaching/learning process. We are in a business of teaching; but what we are selling is learning. Above all, teachers must be learners. We must actively model “learning” so our community sees us learning, too. The science of teaching requires us to ask questions and seek answers by talking to colleagues, asking students, listening, observing, noticing, journaling, writing, reading, researching, advancing the science of learning, even in a small ways, by our contributions. This course, *Teacher as Researcher* invites you to choose a question, a current educational issue or a topic of interest and pursue it as a researcher. What interests you? What do you want to know? Do you have an idea of a curricular and instructional practice you want to create or try out?

There is a wealth of topics with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards. Preparing students, and curriculum and instruction to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges with limited budgets, standard based assessments and ever changing standards. Perhaps you and your team are charged with evaluating or developing curriculum and instruction practices. Perhaps you have a passion for learning methodologies, or social and philosophical foundations of education. Choose topics from the psychology of learning, gender studies, brain growth development or counseling. Technology, apps and digital tools, ways of engaging students, offer topics for research. Explore best practices. Argue for or against educational methodology supporting your claims with evidence. Perhaps you have a passion for leadership issues, educational policy, teacher accountability, teacher evaluation or strategies for teaching effectiveness.

Choose content specific topics in any subject matter or develop essential questions or methods of inquiry. Age-old topics such as classroom management, dealing with students who have learning disabilities, or second language learners or reluctant and struggling learners offer opportunities for exploration.

Perhaps you want to explore a new strategy, create an educational game or write a curriculum for content that has not yet been written. Perhaps you want to create some learning tools. The important thing in choosing a topic to explore is to choose a topic that you are interested in and you have a passion for. And if you prefer to step out of

education and explore a topic that is of interest to you and meets your professional need, feel free to contact the instructor with your ideas.

If you just don't have a clue what topic would work for you, browse the Internet. Type "current issues in education" into any search engine, or check a newspaper's education section or visit your state department of education's web site. Visit schools, talk to other teachers, parents and students. Spend some time with the latest professional books. Visit one of the more popular publishing houses for educational materials such as Houghton Mifflin, McGraw Hill, Scholastic, Heinemann, Stenhouse, or Pearson and explore the myriad of educational topics. Check out a few educational journals either online or at a university library or professional library. Browse the topics. What grabs your interest?

## Lesson 4 –Writing a Thesis Statement

Once you have selected a topic for study, it is important to write a thesis statement, a reason to study this topic. This will help to give your study a focus and a purpose. A thesis statement will define the points you want to make, the questions you want to answer and the “so what?” of the study. Writing out a thesis statement before you begin will give you a working outline. You may change your thesis as you read and research. Feel free to do so, restating your thesis in writing and including the final copy in your final paper in the opening paragraph. For now, it is an organizational tool to get you focused.

Here are some key points to remember about thesis statements:

- The thesis statement is the theme of the research paper. Once you have chosen a topic, the thesis directs the focus of the topic to a purpose. A thesis statement answers the questions:

**So what? What is important? What is the purpose? What do I want to find out?**

For example: My topic might be “Autism”. In answer to the questions, I want to know what will help kids who are diagnosed with autism to learn more effectively in my elementary classroom? The thesis statement might be “What kinds of assistive technology tools show effective results with students in an elementary school setting?”

- The thesis statement directly answers the questions you want to explore in your research. A thesis is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself. The subject, or topic, might be “gender disparities in literacy”; a thesis statement might be to narrow the topic to “boys and literacy” and the purpose might be to discern boy-friendly literacy and effective strategies to engage boys in school literacy.
- The thesis statement gives the audience or reader a way to interpret the significance of the subject matter in your paper or project. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence around the thesis that will attempt to support your claims and the logic of your interpretation.

END OF SAMPLE PAGES.

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