

**EDRG 5350-01: Reading and Language Arts: Research and Trends
Course Syllabus ~ Spring 2010**

*Instructor: Mary F. Borba, Ed.D.
Message Phone: 209-581-1942
Office hours: Thursdays 1-4 pm
Class day/time: Thursdays 4:30-7:30*



*Class Location: DBH 104
Office Phone: 209-664-6718
Office Location: DBH 328
Email: mborba@csustan.edu*

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION MOTTO

Advocates for children and their communities

MISSION

The mission of the College of Education is to engage faculty and students in instruction, research, and activities that provide subject specific, pedagogical, and practical knowledge essential for planning, implementing, and assessing professional activities. We are committed to the education of diverse educational leaders who meet the needs of a multicultural and multilingual society. The programs are designed to advance the personal, ethical, and professional qualities of students through participation in coursework, field experiences, and research that together cultivate reflection and encourage innovations central to the field of education. The College provides multiple and systematic opportunities for candidates to make connections between their professional duties and the role of education within the local and global society and to serve as advocates for children and their communities.

OUR VISION

The professional preparation programs in the College of Education have a shared vision: To prepare teachers and service personnel who impact positively and optimally on the achievement of all K-12 students in academic and non-academic areas. The attributes that underline our school-based preparation programs are high standards, academic rigor, and intellectual integrity. CSU Stanislaus, College of Education has an enduring commitment to the preparation of professionals who are:

- √ competent in their chosen areas,
- √ able to integrate subject-matter content with pedagogy appropriate to their field of study,
- √ culturally responsive, responsible, knowledgeable, and appreciative of the diversity among learners
- √ committed to self-assessment and reflection
- √ partners, educational advocates and leaders at the school level and in the wider community,
- √ users of technology that enhances teaching and learning.

Purpose

The primary purpose of this course is to provide students with a review of the latest research related to literacy instruction. It includes an in-depth analysis of one or more topics in reading/language arts instruction and pedagogy, as well as evaluations of current trends. The concept of “teacher as researcher” is emphasized.

Course Goals

By reflecting on the practice of teaching reading and writing, course readings, and on-going discussions, students will:

- Extend their knowledge of current trends, research, issues, and innovations in literacy.

- Apply the concept of teacher as researcher through the design and implementation of a research study addressing an issue in a classroom setting.
- Use multiple data sources such as observations, interviews, and surveys in the study.
- Submit a well-written research paper based on the research conducted from the action research study.

Performance Outcomes

The learner will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of current trends, relevant research, issues, problems, and innovations in reading and language arts instruction through a final exam.
- Apply the concept of teacher as researcher through the design and implementation of an action research study.
- Practice research techniques such as observational recording, interview, and survey in an effective manner.
- Identify a research question and implement an action research study in an elementary or secondary classroom.
- Submit a well-written research paper based on the research conducted from the action research study.

Required Textbook: Membership in the International Reading Association and subscription to *The Reading Teacher*. Available at <http://www.reading.org/General/Membership.aspx> for \$42.00. Bring a copy of your International Reading Association membership card to class on the first day or email evidence of subscription to instructor. Apply for membership by the end of January, 2010.

Course Requirements

1. **Attendance and participation** at each session is vital to learn information and to work and share within groups. During presentations, it is important to support other cohort members in a positive manner. A missed session requires a make-up. Students are expected to notify instructor if they will be absent or late. Students are also responsible for negotiating with instructor how missed class will be made up. There will be a deduction of 5% total class points for each missed class.
2. **Weekly readings** with notes/key ideas maintained in a notebook submitted at the end of the course. Each week's notebook entry should be clearly marked:
 - a. *Week #/date*
 - b. *Title of article, author, publication*
 - c. *Notes*
 Students are expected to read at least one research-based article a week and record notes/reflections in the notebook due on May 6th. Articles are of your choice and can be related to distinguished educator presentation, literature review for action research project, and the research trend presentation. Notes may be hand-written. Each week you are to post on Bb a key idea from your reading to enrich the group's learning.
3. **Class research project.** Participate in a whole class research project and write up findings in a 2-3 page paper. Project will be led by a doctoral student who will guide and facilitate the process.
4. **Group research and presentation (45 min.).** Participate in an issues or trends group (3 team members) researching current findings about a topic and prepare an interesting powerpoint presentation to the class which includes a relevant bibliography of resources related to the topic. A minimum of 2 articles per group member will be the basis for the presentation. The oral presentation should last approximately 45 minutes which includes time for a creative "hook" and activity to assist with understanding key concepts/ideas. The goal is to teach the class what's essential about this topic with implications for instruction. A two-page handout should be provided to each class member and the

information will be included in the class final. Included in the handout will be a relevant bibliography of resources related to the topic used to prepare presentation.

5. **Individual presentation (10 min).** A presentation will be prepared on a distinguished educator and his/her research. One-page handout with brief bio and important contributions provided to class members.
6. **Conduct an action research project** in your classroom or in another teacher's classroom. The research project should be small in scale. A classroom problem will be identified and an action plan developed. Data will be collected and analyzed and then presented in a final research paper and poster session.



Decisions about how to collect data will need to be made. Some means of data collection are:

- Transcribe conversation
- Take field notes
- Develop checklists
- Interviews
- Video or tape-recordings
- Surveys or questionnaires
- Assessments such as IRIs, running records, etc.
- Collection of student work

For those students in the course who are not presently teaching in a classroom, it is highly recommended you team up with a teacher in the class who will share his/her students with you. It is possible that you collaborate and share a similar research question.

7. **Write a research paper** of approximately 8-10 pages double-spaced (no more) using APA format based on your action research findings. Five articles will be used to support the project and literature review. The research paper will include: Introduction, identification of the problem, literature review, description of plan, data collected with analysis, and plan for future action.
8. **Present a summary of your action research findings** during a poster session (similar to a science fair display). The poster session will include the research question, data collection techniques, samples,

graphs, photographs, illustrations, a summary and conclusions. An abstract of the research will be provided for each member of the class.

Grading Standards

Your grade for the course will be based on the following items:

1. Attendance and participation at each session is vital to learn information and to work and share within groups. During presentations, it is important to support other cohort members in a positive manner. A missed session requires a make-up. Students are expected to notify instructor if they will be absent or late. Students are also responsible for negotiating with instructor how missed class will be made up. There will be a deduction of 5% total class points for each missed class.
2. Required assignments turned in on time. Please check CSUS email, Bb, and the syllabus on a regular basis for important course information. Late work results in 5% reduction in points. Assignments will not be accepted more than one week late.
3. Appearance of assignments as well as content is important. In all situations, your written assignments should reflect your best effort. All written assignments should be word processed. Use correct grammar, spelling and punctuation for all writing. Research papers will be in APA format.

A= 90-100%

B=80-89%

C=70-79%

Point Assignment

Distinguished educator presentation	50
Research group presentation	100
Action research project & paper	300
Reading notebook	150
Final	100
Total	700 pts

Action Research Project Points

Group Research Activity (Begin day 1 of class)	50
Action Research Plan - due 3/18/10	25
Article/Report	150
<u>Poster session</u>	<u>75</u>

Total

300 pts



This syllabus and weekly plans are subject to change with notice.

COURSE OUTLINE: EDRG 5350: Reading and Language Arts: Issues and Trends

Week 1: February 18 Assignment: Collect data and bring to class next week.	M. Borba: Introductions: Ourselves, the course, syllabus, and texts. Review of Action Research/Teacher as Researcher J. Fisk: Class Research Project M. Borba: Distinguished Educator Presentations & Signups
Week 2: February 25 Assignment: Find 2 articles related to research and data collected on technology & literacy learning. Discuss them on Bb.	J. Fisk: Class Research Project - Data Collection & Analysis Charts M. Borba: Distinguished Educator Presentation W. Jacobs: Library Research – Computer Lab
Week 3: March 4 Assignment: Write 2-3 page paper in APA format making connections between data and articles.	Janine Fisk: Articles & connections to project data; paper format W. Jacobs: Library Research & APA Format in Writing Research Papers M. Borba: Research Proposal for Course M. Borba: Research Trends Presentation
Week 4: March 11 Paper due today. Assignment: Research Proposal due next week. See format in syllabus.	Individual Distinguished Educator Presentations: 1. 4. 2. 5. 3. 6.
Week 5: March 18 Proposal due today.	Individual Distinguished Educator Presentations: 1. 4. 2. 5. 3. 6.
Week 6: March 25	Individual Distinguished Educator Presentations: 1. 4. 2. 5. 3. 6.
Week 7: April 1	Individual Distinguished Educator Presentations: 1. 4. 2. 5. 3. 6.
SPRING BREAK	NO CLASS
Week 8: April 15	Research Trend Presentations: 1. 2.
Week 9: April 22	Research Trend Presentations: 1. 2.
Week 10: April 29	Research Trend Presentations: 1. 2.
Week 11: May 6 Notebook due today. Poster & research paper due May 20th.	Research Trend Presentations: 1. 2.
Week 12: May 13	No Class – Time to prepare poster and finalize research paper
Week 13: May 20 Poster & Research Paper due today.	Poster Session – Meet in P118 & P119
Week 14: May 27	Final

**Distinguished Educator Presentations – 10 min **Research Trend Presentation –2-3 in group – 45 min*

Each week you are expected to read at least one article and write notes in your "Reading Notebook" due on May 6th. Post on Bb a key idea taken from week's readings. This will be part of your "Reading Notebook" points.



What is Action Research?

Action Research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully using the techniques of research. It is based on the following assumptions:

- teachers work best on problems they have identified for themselves;
- teachers become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently;
- teachers help each other by working collaboratively;
- working with colleagues helps teachers in their professional development.

What Action Research Is Not

1. It is **not** the usual things teachers do when they think about their teaching. Action Research is systematic and involves collecting evidence on which to base rigorous reflection.
2. It is **not** just problem-solving. Action Research involves problem-posing, not just problem-solving. It does **not** start from a view of problems as pathologies. It is motivated by a quest to improve and understand the world by changing it and learning how to improve it from the effects of the changes made.
3. It is **not** research on other people. Action Research is research by particular people on their own work to help them improve what they do.
4. It is **not** the scientific method applied to teaching. Action Research is **not** just about hypothesis-testing or about using data to come to conclusions. It is concerned with changing situations, not just interpreting them. It takes the researcher into view. Action Research is a systematically-evolving process of changing both the researcher and the situations in which he or she works.

What Do Teacher Researchers Do?

Teacher researchers...

- develop research questions based on their own curiosity about teaching and learning in their classrooms;
- examine their underlying assumptions about teaching and learning;
- systematically collect data from and with their students;
- share and discuss their data and research methodology with fellow teacher researchers;
- analyze and interpret their data with the support of their colleagues;
- write about their research;
- share their findings with students, colleagues, and members of the educational community;
- discuss with colleagues the relationships among practice, theory, and research;
- assume responsibility for their own professional growth.

Five Phases of Action Research

Phase I - Problem Identification:

- Why do you want to do it? Is it an important and practical problem, something worth your time and effort, something that could be beneficial to you, your students and others?
- Is the problem stated clearly and in the form of a question? Is it broad enough to allow for a range of insights and findings? Is it narrow enough to be manageable within your time frame and your daily work?

Phase II - Plan of Action

- Will you develop and implement a new strategy or approach to address your question? If so, what will it be?
- Will you focus your study on existing practices? If so, which particular ones?
- What is an appropriate timeline for what you are trying to accomplish?

Phase III - Data Collection

- What types of data should you try to collect in order to answer your question?
- How will you ensure that you have multiple perspectives?
- What resources exist and what information from others might be useful in helping you to frame your question, decide on types of data to collect, or to help you in interpreting your findings?

Phase IV - Analysis of Data

- What can you learn from the data? What patterns, insights, and new understandings can you find?
- What meaning do these patterns, insights, and new understandings have for your practice? For your students?

Phase V - Plan for Future Action

- What will you do differently in your classroom as a result of this study?
- What might you recommend to others?
- How will you write about what you have learned, so that the findings will be useful to you and to others?

Starting Points for Developing a Question

I would like to improve...

I am perplexed by...

I'm really curious about...

I want to learn more about...

Something I think would really make a difference is...

Something I would like to do to change is...

Right now, some areas I'm particularly interested in are...

Examples of Good Classroom Action Research Questions

1. How can I help the students in my classroom feel comfortable working with diverse groupings of classmates and overcome, at least part of the time, their desire to always be their friends?
2. How can I more effectively facilitate independent writing in my kindergarten classroom?
3. How can fifth grade students be encouraged to write thoughtful inquiry questions for a science fair?
4. What kinds of assessments best help me understand and teach a particular learner with autism?
5. What changes in our teaching styles, curriculum design, materials and professional support are needed to implement a new math program in our inclusive classroom?
6. How does the direct teaching of anger management skills affect the classroom climate in primary-age school children?
7. What classroom strategies are effective in developing student self-evaluation of their learning?
8. How can my instructional language be more strategic and encourage independence?
9. How can I better support my struggling readers?
10. What changes need to occur in the writing program to improve the content of student writing?
11. I am not happy with my teaching of spelling. Are there other approaches that will yield better results?
12. How can I motivate my students to read outside of class?
13. How can I make sure that my English learners' needs are being met throughout the day?

Techniques for Gathering Data

1. **Interviews** with students, parents, teachers
2. **Checklists** of skills, behaviors, abilities, movement, procedures, interactions, resources
3. **Portfolios** of a range of work from students of different abilities around a particular topic; a representation of a total experience; a collection of documents for analysis
4. **Individual files** of students' work (e.g., tapes, samples of work, art work, memos, photos of models/projects, reports), of students' opinions; of student attitudes, of students' experiences
5. **Diaries/journals** written by teachers, students, parents, class groups, teachers
6. **Field notes/observation records** - informal notes written by a teacher
7. **Logs** of meetings, lessons, excursions, school expectations, material used
8. **Student-teacher discussion/interaction** - records of comments and thoughts generated by students
9. **Questionnaires** of attitudes, opinions, preferences, information
10. **Audiotapes** of meetings, discussions in class or about data gathered, games, group work, interviews, whole class groups, monologues, readings, lectures, demonstrations
11. **Videotapes** of classrooms, lessons, groups, demonstrations, a day in a school, lunch times
12. **Still photography** of groups working, classrooms, faces, particular students over time, at fixed intervals in a lesson
13. **Time-on-task analysis** of students, teachers; over a lesson, a day, a week
14. **Case study** – a comprehensive picture/study of a student or a group of students

Guidelines for Data Collection

Asking the right questions is the key skill in effective data collection.

- Be clear as to why you are collecting data. Formulate good questions that relate to the specific information needs of the project.
- Be clear about how you are going to use the data you collect.

- Design a process to collect data. Our beliefs and values affect this selection process.
- Use the appropriate data analysis tools and be certain the necessary data are being collected. The data:
 - must be accurate;
 - should be useful;
 - must not be too time consuming; and
 - must be reliable enough to allow you to formulate hypotheses and develop strategies with confidence.
- Decide how much data is needed. Ask:
 - what is an accurate sample size?
 - for how long should the data be collected?
- Make sure that the data will make your job easier.
- Use multiple sources of data to increase the believability of the findings. Collect data from more than two sources or points of view, each which provides a unique justification with respect to relevant information about the situation.
- Present the data in a way that clearly communicates the answer to the question.
- Be aware that how you set up the situation influences the results.
- Review the data. Ask:
 - do the data tell you what you intended?
 - can you display the data as you intended?
- Do not expect too much from data. Remember:
 - data should indicate the answer to the question asked during the design of the collection process.
 - you do not make inferences from the data that the data will not support.
 - data don't stand alone. It's the meaning we apply to the data that is critical. "Data do not drive decisions; people do."
 - the stronger the disagreements with the data, the bigger the learning potential. It is important to validate the different views and try to come up with a world view.
- Visually display the data in a format that can reveal underlying patterns.
 - Look for patterns related to time or sequence as well as patterns related to differences in staff and other factors.
- The key issue is not how do we collect data, but how do we generate useful information from the data?

A Process for Analyzing Your Data

In using qualitative research, you will be collecting and analyzing at the same time. These processes inform each other. Be open to new ways of thinking as you learn more from your data.

1. Go through everything you have collected. Make notes as you go.
2. Look for themes, patterns, big ideas. Key words and phrases can trigger themes. Determine these themes by your scan of the data, not on your preconceived ideas of what you think the categories are.
3. Narrow the themes down to something manageable. (3-5 of your most compelling and interesting)
4. Go back through all of your data and code or label information according to the themes in order to organize your ideas. Some ideas may fit into more than one theme. Create sub-groups under each theme.

5. Write continuously. Jot down what you are seeing, what questions are emerging, and what you are learning. Keep notes on those new ideas which are unanticipated. These may be findings or surprises which you had not planned.
6. Review your information after it is coded/labeled to see if there is
 - a frequency of certain items and/or
 - powerful, interesting, unusual comments or behaviors which are of particular interest to you. This may be an incident which gives you a new insight, and it may be one of the most important to hold on to.
7. Identify the main points which appear most frequently and are the most powerful. It will be hard to let go of some of your information, but it is important to sift through it.
8. Write up your major points. You can write them up by
 - theme,
 - chronologically, or
 - the different modes you used for collecting information.
9. Draw the information together to include some of the evidence which supports each of your themes. The reader should be able to draw conclusions based on the evidence you have presented.



In summary, action research is a **model of professional development** where educators study student learning related to their own teaching, a process that allows them to learn about their own instructional practices and to continue to monitor improved student learning. Richard A. Schmuck (1997) compares action research to looking into a mirror at oneself taking action. Conducting action research provides educators with an avenue to **reflect on one's own teaching practices** and engage in self-directed learning, with the ultimate goal of improving student learning. In order to reach optimal learning, teachers must continuously build upon their knowledge of student learning and intentionally study the instructional practices they are implementing in the classroom. (Rawlinson & Little, 2004)

Action (teacher) research is a natural extension of **good teaching**. Observing students closely, analyzing their needs, and adjusting the curriculum to fit the need of all students have always been important skills demonstrated by fine teachers. (Hubbard & Power, 1999)

Action Research is a process through which teachers collaborate in evaluating their practice, try out new strategies, and record their work in a form that is understandable by other teachers.(Elliot, 1991)

Action research never really ends because learning is a cyclical process. An action researcher is always observing, analyzing, designing, assessing, and adjusting. The cyclical nature of action research provides teachers with ongoing opportunities to reflect on and refine their own teaching practices.

Resources:

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/659>

<http://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/>

<http://www.ar.blend-xl.eu/>

<http://www.infed.org/research/b-actres.htm>

http://www.alliance.brown.edu/pubs/themes_ed/act_research.pdf

<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/guide.html>

[Action Research PowerPoint Presentation](#)

Action Research Plan

*Due March 18, 2010 – Email to mborba@csustan.edu by midnight.
Wait for instructor feedback before beginning action research study.*

Name(s):

School:

Grade Level:

Research Question: *Pose a question that will focus your study. Be sure to include what student learning will occur and what instructional practices will be implemented.*

Learning Outcomes: *What specific student learning will occur?*

Instructional Focus: *Describe the specific instructional practice(s) or issue that will be studied. Specify when and how the practice will be implemented or how it will be studied.*

Data Collection: *Specify the data sources that you will collect that are aligned to the classroom problem. How often will you collect the data?*

Data Source 1: (What & How?)

Data Source 2: (What & How?)

Data Source 3: (What & How?)

Support: *What support will you need from your colleagues?*

Sharing the Results

A Format for Reporting Action Research & Writing the Final Research Paper

Title of Action Research Project:

Name of Teacher Researcher:

Abstract: *Provide a brief summary of your action research report. Topics may include student sample, instructional focus, and data collection and analysis.*

Introduction: *Provide a context for your action research. Why is it important?*

Classroom Problem: *Provide a description of your identified classroom problem. How did you identify the classroom problem? Describe the students who were affected and possible causes of the problem. What were the goals for improvement?*

Literature Review: *What does the research say about your area of research. A minimum of five articles should be the basis for this section.*

Research Process: *Provide a detailed description of your research process. What was your research question? What instructional strategies or practices were implemented that were aligned to the classroom problem? Describe your implementation.*

Data Collection and Analysis: *Provide a narrative summary of your collected and analyzed data. If appropriate, please include graphs and tables to accompany the narrative summary. Include templates of your data collection sources as well as student samples.*

Taking Action: *Provide a summary of your decisions based on your analyzed data. What are your next steps? Do you need to continue your action research using the same procedures? Do you need to revise your action research procedures? Were you satisfied with your results and ready to investigate new concerns?*

Professional Reflection: *As an action researcher, what did you learn through this process? How did conducting action research impact your teaching?*

References