

## **EDCI 5784**

### **Teachers as Inquirers**

The student internship you're doing this semester is part of an important transition in which you are moving from the position of "student" to that of "teacher." In addition to changing how you spend time in and move around schools and classrooms, the work you'll do this semester shifts your position in the classroom's organization of power: instead of being a scrutinized student doing tasks that the teacher provides, you begin to scrutinize students from a teacher's standpoint and think about how to devise tasks for them. This transition is difficult and may take years to complete, so it's important that you start off on the right track. It's common when you first start looking at classrooms from a teacher's perspective to fall into practices of "surveillance," your attention focused only on those things that the institution makes salient (e.g., student behavior, whether students get the right answers or not). This class, like your other education coursework, is intended to develop instead a richer awareness of classroom processes that is alive to how events begin and end outside the institutional frame of the classroom and involve processes not immediately obvious. To make sense of those processes you have to learn to systematically study and reflect on your classroom, your teaching, and the performances of your students. Because your students come to the classroom with different knowledge or familiarity with the subject matter, different experiences and orientations to school; and because classrooms are collective processes, with students interacting with each other and your tasks in complex ways that change over time, there is very little about teaching that is "routine" and much that is difficult to fathom without careful inquiry. This class is an introduction to some of the skills you'll need to carry out that inquiry.

#### **Learning Trajectories** (Intasc standards listed in parentheses)

In this course, you will begin:

to learn to look at classrooms as complex ecologies of practices with different kinds of structures and organizational features (9.11)

to learn to identify professional resources outside the classroom that you can use in constructing a successful teaching environment (9.12) (9.32)

to become familiar with the various kinds of research on teaching and learn to identify the kinds that might be useful to you as a practitioner (9.12)

to gain some familiarity and practice with the methods of inquiry that you'll need to study your own classrooms, in particular ways of observing and noting classroom processes (9.11)

to practice strategies of reflection and self-assessment to make sense of your teaching over time (9.11, 9.21, 9.22)

to practice collaborative problem-solving with other practitioners. You need practice analyzing evidence of student performance, both to identify possible influences on it and to use the analysis to plan changes in teaching practice (9.11) (9.31, 9.32)

to explore ways that inquiry can fit into a teaching career by looking at changes in a teacher's practices over time. (9.31) (9.33)

#### **Confidentiality**

We need to emphasize the issue of confidentiality at the outset. You'll be writing about the classrooms in which you're interning. Because teacher inquiry entails discussion among a groups of inquirers, we'll be talking in class about what you write and observe. However, it is the obligation of all class members to insure that fieldnotes and papers for this class remain **confidential**. That is, you are not to copy or disseminate the writings of other students in any way or talk about them to non-classmembers. Inclusion of any of your own materials in your teacher portfolio can be done only with the consent of your advisors or model directors. Failure to maintain confidentiality will have a major negative impact on your grade.

### Course Texts

[These will change from semester to semester]

Walker, R. & Adelman, C. (1975). A guide to classroom observation (Currently out of print; may use photocopied portions in coursepack)

Mohr, M., and MacLean, M. (1987). Working together: A guide for teacher-researchers. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Ken Macrorie (1980). "The I-Search paper" (from Searching Writing)

Emerson, R., Fretz, R. , and Shaw, L. (1995). Chapters 2 & 3 from Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes.

### Articles and on-line readings

Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teaching learning in communities.

Noffke, S. (1997). Professional, personal, and political dimensions of action research.

Hammack, F. (1997). Ethical issues in teacher research.

Nancy Barnes, "Teachers teaching teachers" Education Week, 1-19-2000  
<http://www.edweek.org/ew/ewstory.cfm?slug=19barnes.h19>

Teachers as frontline researchers and policymakers  
<http://www.ilt.columbia.edu/k12/tpi/tpiaera.html>

NSTA statement on the role of research in science teaching:  
<http://www.nsta.org/handbook/roleres.asp>

Fordham, S. "'Those loud black girls': (Black) women, silence, and gender 'passing' in the Academy.

Nespor, J. "Work and academic tasks . . ."

Phelan, P., Davidson, A., and Cao, H. "Students' multiple worlds . . ."

Lorrie Shepard, "The role of assessment in a learning culture"  
<http://www.aera.net/pubs/er/arts/29-07/shep01.htm>

"The cycle of inquiry and learning" <http://www.essentialschools.org/pubs/horace/15/v15n04.html>

"High standards for essential learning" <http://www.essentialschools.org/pubs/horace/16/v16n03.htm>

"Looking collaboratively at student work" <http://www.essentialschools.org/pubs/horace/13/v13n02.html>

Annenberg "Looking at Student Work" website: <http://www.lasw.org/>

### Course Tasks

(R in parentheses beside task indicates linked rubric)

1. Observation and analysis of classroom processes
  - a. exercises from classroom video
  - b. weekly observation notes (R)
  - c. classroom profiles
  - d. research questions generated from observations
2. Reflection Logs (R)
3. Interview and analysis (R)
4. Analysis of student work (R)
5. Resource survey
  - After-school programs
  - Arts/ecological/etc.
  - Community agencies
  - Local and national organizations
  - Conference and funding opportunities for TI
6. Essay on the research literature on teaching issues in your field (Modified "I-Search") (R)

### Course Products and Grade Weights

1. Observation and Analysis of Classroom Processes	25%	
2. Reflection Logs		15%
3. Interview and Analysis	15%	
4. Analysis of Student Work		15%
5. Resource Surveys		15%
6. Essay on research literature on teaching	15%	

### ATTENDANCE

I expect you to attend every class. Absence will affect your grade negatively. The first absence counts off 2 pts; every absence thereafter counts off 3 pts. While it pains me to raise this issue, I would like you in class when the class begin. Two excessive tardies (10 minutes or more) will count as one absence. I will not give extensions or accept late papers except in cases where there's been a death in your family, you've been in a serious accident, or had a debilitating illness (verified by a note from a doctor). If any of these situations apply you should inform the Dean of Students' office, and they will inform me. Do this as soon as possible, especially if the problem develops early in the semester. Do not imagine that you can miss half of the classes, then come in the last week saying you've been sick and can I give you extra assignments so you make up whatever you've missed.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**Session 1

Review of Syllabus  
Research on Teaching and Teacher Inquiry  
Situating Teacher Inquiry as a research approach

Session 2

Teachers' accounts of growth and inquiry in teaching

Session 3

Generating initial guidelines for classroom observation  
Practicing Observation (Video exercise)

Session 4

Discussion of Video exercise  
Interviews: constructing a protocol  
Identifying interviewees

Session 5

Observations

Session 6

Observations

Session 7

Observations

Session 8

Observation notes  
Analyzing Observations

Session 9

Observation notes  
Analyzing Observations

Session 10

Analyzing Observations

Session 11

Analysis of Student work

Session 12

**Thanksgiving Week**

Session 13

Sharing resource portfolio

Session 14

Discussion of Teacher Interview Transcripts

Session 15

Wrap-up

### Rubric for Observations

A:

In addition to all requirements for B and C grades, the description situates the observer in the events; notes are constructed as narrative which show rather than “tell” what happened, paraphrased dialog is included; observations include lesson profiles

B:

Fieldnotes incorporate participants terms for things; the length and structure of classroom events are clearly identified, as are transitions across events.

C:

The notes describe what happened during the observation, and in addition contain some warranted interpretation (i.e., inferences based on some clearly stated assumptions or grounds) of its meanings for participants. However, notes tend to tell rather than show what happened.

D:

The notes contain descriptions of classroom processes, but these are summary descriptions rather than narratives of how things unfolded. The notes are superficial, use school jargon and labels to categorize students, teachers, or events.

F:

The notes are not done and presented on time.

### Rubric for Reflection Logs

A:

In addition to B&C requirements, regular reflections on each class, grounded in observations, connections to possible teaching strategies or actions; connections to readings, other classes, etc.

B:

Reflections on each class, grounded in specific observations.

C:

Reflections on each class session:

F:

Inconsistent, superficial

### Rubric Analysis of Student Work<sup>1</sup>

[This rubric identifies desired qualities of collective discussions; grades will be assigned to groups; if groups are not working at least up to “C” level the instructor will intervene to remedy the situation]

A: The analysis:

- looks for patterns in the evidence that provide clues to how and what the student was thinking.
- uses differences of opinion among colleagues as an opportunity to explore and understand each other's
- formulates strategies for pursuing questions generated in analysis of student work
- leads to ideas about things you would like to try in your classroom as a result of looking at the student's work

B: In the analysis you:

- make your own thinking clear to others.
- avoid judging what you see.
- look openly and broadly; don't let your expectations cloud your vision.
- Identify what you learned about how this student thinks and learns
- Craft questions about teaching and assessment based on looking at the student's work.

C: During the analysis session, you

- stay focused on the evidence that is present in the work.
- Identify what you saw in this student's work that was interesting or surprising

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<sup>1</sup> This rubric is based on a student assessment process as defined in "Learning from Student Work," by Eric Buchovecky, Atlas Communities project, a collaborative process adapted from the work of Mark Driscoll at Education Development Center and that of Steve Seidel and others at Harvard University's Project Zero.

A:

In addition to having the characteristics required for a B paper, an “A” essay explores how teacher inquiry into the chosen issue might contribute to the literature, or identifies aspects of the research that limit its usefulness to practicing teachers. It identifies questions unanswered (i.e., questions for further study). The essay itself describes the search that led to the articles chosen for review (i.e., explains how you found the articles and your reasons for choosing them). The articles are clearly summarized and related to one another. The essay makes connections to other readings or experiences you’ve had. The paper produces rich, generative questions. The essay has no grammatical or spelling problems that might obscure the development of the your ideas.

B:

The essay analyzes research reports on teaching that use different methodologies [defined in the assignment], or reach different conclusions or analyses. The essay quotes or summaries relevant sections from the reports and cites these appropriately using American Psychological Association (APA) style conventions. The essay identifies the sources of disagreements among competing accounts. The essay is well organized with few if any problems of organization or grammar.

C:

The essay identifies literature relevant to an instructional issue, but merely summarizes instead of analyzing the material. The distinction between “analyzing” and “summarizing” is defined by Mike Rose (1989) as taking an argument apart. He explains that it is common for college writers, to merely summarize when asked to analyze a text:

This was something I had seen with students who lacked experience writing papers that required them to take an idea carefully apart. They approach the task in terms they can handle, retell the material to you, summarize it, demonstrate that, yes, they can understand the stuff, and here it is. Sometimes it is very hard to get them to see that summary is not adequate, for it had been adequate so many times before. (176).

Summary essays tend to be heavy on generalizations, and do not quote or cite the readings adequately.

D:

A "D" essay is disorganized and has many major mechanical problems but shows some germ of thought with interpretations supplied by a sympathetic reader. There are major problems with diction, sentence structure, or spelling.

F:

Extreme grammatical and organizational problems, failure to review or analyze required number of articles. Articles chosen inappropriate.