

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Department of Educational Leadership & Policy Analysis

Instructional Leadership and School Improvement, ELPA 847
Spring 2008 @ UW-Whitewater

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Course Description

The guiding theme of this class is creating and sustaining successful teaching and learning environments for students and staff. It is designed to provide teachers, curriculum specialists, principals, and other administrators with an introduction to instructional leadership to enhance student learning and to sustain school renewal and improvement. Through assigned readings, discussion, structured activities, individual assignments, and collaborative group work, both theoretical and practical aspects of school improvement through effective instructional leadership practices will be critically explored. Central issues and topics in the course include:

1. Measures and indicators of a school with high performing students and staff;
2. The core technologies of schooling and models of teaching;
3. Perspectives on the purpose of teaching & instructional leadership;
4. The influence of cultural diversity;
5. Successful strategies for enhancing teaching;
6. Models for organizational capacity and development;
7. Research on the relationship of leadership and student learning outcomes;
8. The nature and context of teacher work and its influence on teachers' acquisition and use of professional knowledge;
9. Selecting, socializing, and supporting instructional staff;
10. Accessing, analyzing, and using information on student/school performance.

Course Readings

Required texts are:

Bransford, J.D., Brown, A.L., & Cocking, R.R. (Eds.). (2000). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

National Study of School Evaluation. (1997). *School improvement: Focusing on student performance. A comprehensive guide for data-driven and research-based school improvement planning*. Schaumburg, IL: NSSE.

Additional readings will be assigned weekly and are accessible through Learn@UW. You will need a UW-Madison Net ID and password. Info and instructions are here -- <http://kb.wisc.edu/helpdesk/page.php?id=4966>

Access Learn@UW by going to the UW-Madison home page, <http://www.wisc.edu/> and clicking on Learn@UW on the right side by “My UW Madison.” Once you sign in, our course should be listed under 2008 – Spring.

Course Expectations

1. Class participation & facilitation

Attendance and active participation in class are very important and will be part of your grade. To the greatest extent possible, please participate in all class activities, complete all assigned readings and be prepared to critically discuss them in class. Class time will be an opportunity to build a learning community focused on the goals and topics of this course. Each student will facilitate one or two class sessions involving discussion of the readings. Because of the nature of activities, there are no appropriate ways for you to make up work that was missed due to an absence.

2. Philosophy of Education Statement

In this assignment, you should respond to this essential question: *In a diverse, democratic society, what is the purpose of schooling?* This essay is an opportunity to articulate your current philosophy of education. The assignment is both an opportunity for self-reflection and a starting point for the class to get to know you as an educational leader. The rationale for this assignment stems from our belief that (a.) effective educational leaders have a clear vision of what they want students to learn, (b.) instructional leadership and school improvement efforts should intentionally link back to desired student learning opportunities and outcomes, and (c.) your philosophy of education should guide the personal vision of who you want to be as an educational leader. Your essay should be **no longer than 4 double-spaced pages**. Include references in APA format (See <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/> for an APA guide).

3. School Improvement Project

Over the course of the semester, you will work collaboratively in a small group team of 2 or 3 to complete the School Improvement Plan (SIP) as outlined by NSSE. The SIP is a thorough, rigorous endeavor that cannot be completed at the end of the semester in a last minute effort. The six parts of the plan are grouped into three sections (Parts 1 & 2, Parts 3 & 4, and Parts 5 & 6) and drafts of these three sections should be completed at different points of the semester. Examples of outstanding past projects will be available for review.

Your team will choose one school to focus on for your project. Choose a school that one member of the team currently works in and for which they can access information. Assume your team has major leadership responsibilities for developing the plan for this school. Although grounded in an actual school context, the development of the plan is removed from the school. Thus, you will have to make some assumption about what can or has been done, and give more emphasis to some parts of the plan over others. ***Improving teachers’ practice should be given clear priority and emphasis.***

Each team member must include a critical review of the SIP, no longer than 4 double-spaced pages. In your review, you should analyze strengths and weaknesses of the plan (including any parts of the plan you disagree with), and evaluate its overall merits. Each team will also do an in-class presentation on their SIP.

Evaluating Student Work:

Each student's final grade for the course will be based on the instructor's evaluation of the following:

- Class participation (including weekly assignments) & facilitation, 50%
- Philosophy of education statement, 10%
- School improvement project & critical review, 40%

General criteria for evaluating student work are:

1. Construction of Knowledge: Students successfully interpret, analyze, evaluate, or synthesize information (3-point scale).
2. Depth of Understanding: Student understanding of course content and themes is relatively complex and deep, and they demonstrate that understanding through elaborated communication (4-point scale).
3. Connection to Practice: Students successfully connect course content to practice and their specific context. They explore implications that create value and significance for knowledge (3-point scale).

Rubric for Discussion and Group Facilitation

	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Excellent
Grounded in Readings	Activities/Discussion are not grounded in the readings.	Activities/Discussion are usually grounded in the readings but may lose focus at times.	Activities/Discussion are grounded in the readings.
Key Ideas	Key ideas are unclear, underdeveloped, or there are too many to grasp.	A few manageable key ideas are developed.	A few manageable key ideas are clear and well developed.
Engagement	Few students are intellectually engaged.	Most students are intellectually engaged.	All students are intellectually engaged. Opportunities for students to make connections, critique, and synthesize main points to the reading.
Building on Prior Knowledge	Activities/Discussion do not build on prior student knowledge, experiences or course content/context.	Activities/Discussion provide opportunity to build on prior knowledge and experiences and connects key ideas to previous course content.	Activities/Discussion build on prior knowledge and course goals/content, addresses possible misconceptions, which may stem from electronic reading reflections.
Implications for Leadership	Implications for leadership are unclear.	Implications for leadership are explored.	Insightful implications are explored.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- “Activities” without substance
- Trying to cover too much (“Less is more!”)
- Too much activity, not enough attention to readings
- Telling and summarizing for students what they read
- Thinking critique means only being negative
- Having to agree with viewpoints of authors as presented
- Having one student on facilitation team dominate the session
- Facilitators sitting back and watching group discussions rather than participating

ELPA Portfolio

If you are doing the Portfolio for your UW-Madison degree and certification, we recommend consideration of how you might incorporate assignments for this course into the portfolio. For more information about the ELPA Portfolio, please visit:

<http://www.education.wisc.edu/elpa/academics/degrees/certificationprogs.html>

Full Inclusion

We wish to fully include persons with disabilities in this course. Please let us know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments to enable you to participate fully. We will try to maintain the confidentiality of the information that you share. Department chairpersons at UW-Whitewater can also assist students with disabilities.

Course Schedule

<i>Class Session & Date</i>	<i>Text Readings & Assignments Due. Please note, additional readings and/or assignments will be distributed in class and electronically.</i>
1. Jan 23	Introduction Sharing of backgrounds and interests Overview of the course MyUW, Learn@UW Introductory exercise: Elmore on Leadership
2. Jan 30	NSSE Parts 1 & 2
3. Feb 6	Bransford Chapter 1
4. Feb 13	NSSE Parts 3 & 4 Due: Philosophy of Education Statement
5. Feb 20	Bransford Chapters 2-3 Progress check: Drafts of Parts 1 & 2 of School Improvement Project
6. Feb 27	NSSE Parts 5 & 6
7. Mar 5	Bransford Chapter 4
8. Mar 12	Class time for SIP projects
9. Mar 19	Bransford Chapter 5 Progress check: Drafts of Parts 3 & 4 of School Improvement Project
Mar 26	Spring Break
10. Apr 2	Bransford Chapter 6
11. Apr 9	Bransford Chapter 7
12. Apr 16	Bransford Chapters 8 Progress check: Drafts of Parts 5 & 6 of School Improvement Project
13. Apr 23	Bransford Chapter 9
14. Apr 30	Bransford Chapters 10-11
15. May 7	SIP group presentations Due: School Improvement Project, Parts 1-6, and Critical Reflections

