

THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

EDUL 6021- Action Research for School Change

JO BLASE, Ph.D.
Professor

University of Georgia - College of Education
Department of Workforce Education, Leadership, and Social Foundations
River's Crossing
850 College Station Road
Athens, GA 30602-4808
e-mail: jblase@uga.edu
phone: (706) 202-0047

Introduction

This course is a study of the use of data in action research for school change with exercises of practical application. It is designed for building administrators, department chairpersons, instructional lead teachers, staff development specialists, curriculum leaders, and central office supervisors and administrators. The purposes include developing knowledge and skills for planning and carrying out various forms of data analysis and action research projects and encouraging on-going research and reading in the field. Learning will focus on an integration of the extant knowledge base, rationale, and strategies supporting action research and data use in classrooms and schools. Dr. Blase will assist students as they sharpen the focus on responsibility for professional development, perceive their roles realistically, and prepare to perform effectively.

Objectives

- ✓To develop knowledge and understanding of:
 - information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies; and
 - the change process for systems, operations, and individuals.
- ✓To develop the ability to facilitate processes and engage in activities ensuring that:
 - assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals; a variety of sources of information is used to make decisions;
 - and multiple sources of information regarding performance are used by staff and students.

Dear Student and Colleague,

Welcome to your web course, Action Research for School Change! In this course you will study action research as it relates to school change, and you will choose among many excellent resources (areas include basic action research how-to materials, diversity and data, using data for change, teacher collaboration, protocols, and assessment) to enhance your knowledge and skills for facilitating the use of data for school improvement. For your capstone assignment you will have a conversation

(interview) with a colleague and prepare a report including your reflections on that conversation. *If you have questions, I will be available by email: jblass@uga.edu or phone: (706) 202-0047.*

*Best wishes to you and yours,
Jo Blase*

REQUIRED BOOK

Required for all courses with Dr. Jo Blase:

For this required book, you may choose to buy either the longer, traditional edition (used 6th or 7th editions are fine) or the brief edition (chapter numbers are the same). Both are available from ablongman.com, Amazon, Borders, or bookstores specializing in textbooks. (The book will be available in e-version in 2007.)

Traditional edition: Glickman, C.D., Gordon, S.P., & Ross-Gordon, J.M. (2007). Supervision and instructional leadership: A developmental approach (7th ed.). Boston: A.B. Longman/Pearson Education. ISBN 0205489532 @\$110 new, hardback only

Brief edition: Glickman, C.D., Gordon, S.P., & Ross-Gordon, J.M. (2005). The basic guide to supervision and instructional leadership. Boston: A.B. Longman/Pearson Education. ISBN 020540443X @\$70 new, paper only

This text's emphasis on school culture, teachers as adult learners, developmental leadership, democratic education, and collegial supervision has helped redefine the meaning of supervision and instructional leadership for both scholars and practitioners. The book places instructional leadership and school improvement within a community and societal context; provides examples of direct assistance, professional development, and action research; addresses hot issues such as school improvement, constructivist teaching, professional development, Chaos Theory, and state-mandated standards.

Lesson #1: Consider What It Means To Be a Data-Driven School

Data from various sources can serve a number of important purposes. First, data on student learning gathered from standardized tests, district-made tests, student work samples, portfolios, and other sources provide important input to the selection of school or district improvement goals and provide focus for staff development efforts. This process of data analysis and goal development typically determines the content of teachers' professional learning in the areas of instruction, curriculum, and assessment.

Helpful data are typically drawn from many sources, including norm-referenced and criterion referenced tests, grade retention, high school completion, reports of disciplinary actions, school vandalism costs, enrollment in advanced courses, performance tasks, and participation in post-secondary education. Data on individual tests can be analyzed to learn how much students advanced in one year as well as particular strengths and weaknesses associated with the focus of the test. These data are typically disaggregated to reveal differences in learning among subgroups of students. The most common forms of disaggregation include gender, socioeconomic status, native language, and race.

A second use of data is in the design and evaluation of staff development efforts, both for formative and summative purposes. Early in a staff development effort, educational leaders must decide what adults will learn and be able to do and which types of evidence will be accepted as indicators of success. They also determine ways to gather that evidence throughout the change process to help make midcourse


corrections to strengthen the work of leaders and providers. Data can also indicate to policy makers and funding agencies the impact of staff development on teacher practice and student learning.

A third use of data occurs at the classroom level as teachers gather evidence of improvements in student learning to determine the effects of their professional learning on their own students. Teacher-made tests, assignments, portfolios, and other evidence of student learning are used by teachers to assess whether staff development is having desired effects in their classrooms. Because improvements in student learning are a powerful motivator for teachers, evidence of such improvements as a result of staff development experiences helps sustain teacher momentum during the inevitable frustrations and setbacks that accompany complex change efforts. Another benefit of data analysis, particularly the examination of student work, is that the study of such evidence is itself a potent means of staff development. Teachers who use one of several group processes available for the study of student work report that the ensuing discussions of the assignment, the link between the work and content standards, their expectations for student learning, and the use of scoring rubrics improve their teaching and student learning.


If data are to provide meaningful guidance in the process of continuous improvement, teachers and administrators require professional development regarding data analysis, designing assessment instruments, implementing various forms of assessment, and understanding which assessment to use to provide the desired information. Because the pre-service preparation of teachers and administrators in assessment and data analysis has been weak or nonexistent, educators must have generous opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills related to formative classroom assessment, data collection, data analysis, and data-driven planning and evaluation. (Adapted from NSDC)


In *Using Data to Close the Achievement Gap: How to Measure Equity in Our Schools* (2002, Corwin Press; optional reading), Johnson identifies six roles for data: (1) improving the quality of criteria used in problem solving and decision making; (2) describing institutional processes, practices, and progress in schools and districts; (3) examining institutional belief systems underlying assumptions and behaviors; (4) mobilizing the school community for action; (5) monitoring implementation of changes; and (6) accountability. Consider these as you go on to Lesson #2.

Lesson #2: What is Action Research, and How Does It Relate to School Change?


 Read Chapter 20, Glickman et al., “Action Research: The School as the Center of Inquiry”

 Read Chapter 21, Glickman et al., “SuperVision, Change, and School Success”

 Read the article by Emily Calhoun titled “Action Research for School Improvement.” Available FREE online in UGA’s Galileo database (go to Galileo Databases, Education, ERIC). Educational Leadership, v. 59, no.6, pp.18-24 (March 2002)

 Consider whether action research in your school has adequate focus, structure, and time; and consider whether action research or inquiry in your school yields change for school improvement.

Lesson #3: Explore Material Most Likely to Help You Lead Data-Driven School Improvement

 Choose at least one of the many fine materials listed (in several categories) below to study. Books, workbooks, tools, kits, interviews, study guides, websites, and even related videos are available—many FREE, some at cost. MANY of these can be found in your school or colleagues' professional libraries, or in the UGA library. What you explore depends on your knowledge, interests, career plans, and the state of your professional library; all of the materials listed below are very good.

Action Research: Basic How-To Materials

Glanz, J. (1998). *Action research: An educational leader's guide to school improvement* (2nd ed.). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon. This book provides a number of tools for administrators and leadership teams as they study school effectiveness and student performance.

Calhoun, E. (1994). *How to use action research in the self-renewing school*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. This book is clear and user-friendly, an excellent how-to guide for educators, but can be hard to find (try used book sales).

Hopkins, D. (2002). *A teacher's guide to classroom research* (3rd ed.). (2002) Buckingham, England: Open University Press. This book emphasizes changes in classroom practice through careful study by individual teachers as researchers.

Depka, E. (2006). *The data guidebook for teachers and leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Data collection, item analysis, rubrics, classroom assessment, change

Bernhardt, V.L. (2006). *Using data to improve student learning in school districts*. Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education. A title in the *Using Data* series; others focus on elementary, middle, and high schools.

Sagor, R. (2005). *The action research guidebook: A four-step process for educators and school teams*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Creighton, T. (2007). *Schools and data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. (quantitative data)

Mertler, C.A. (2006). *Action research: Teachers as researchers in the classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

The Action Research Website of Madison (WI) School District: guidelines, phases, techniques, how to www.madison.k12.wi.us

Data Use: Data Primer, North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)

The Data Primer is an instructional website designed to help educators become more comfortable with thinking about and using data for the purposes of instructional decision making. The Data Primer is organized around four modules. Each module provides a practical question that educators can ask when developing school improvement plans and contains three sections: The "Tutorial" section uses different graphing techniques to show how data put in graphical form increase readability, illuminate patterns, and

elicit questions about meaning. The "Practice" section lets users apply their own data to the graph type used in the "Tutorial" section. The "Going Further" section acts as a bridge between the sample scenario and actual tools, resources, and services that users can access and implement to address more thoroughly some of the questions and issues that arise throughout the instructional portion.
<http://www.ncrel.org/datause/dataprimer/>

Diversity and Data

Johnson, R.S. (2002). Using data to close the achievement gap. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Using Data for Change

Asking the Right Questions: A School Change Toolkit. Multiple lenses through which to conduct school improvement, with helpful tools. Available FREE from McRel: <http://www.mcrel.org/topics/products/139/>

Using Data to Improve Schools, 2002, American Association of School Administrators

This guide from the American Association of School Administrators explains how to use various data to promote whole-school change and provides tools and insights to help schools cultivate "a district-wide culture of inquiry that values the power of data to inform sound decision-making and improve teaching and learning."

<http://www.aasa.org/edissues/content.cfm?ItemNumber=968&snItemnumber=2132>

Schmuck, R.A. (2006). Practical action research for change. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. Definitions, models, steps, phases, methods, tools, cooperative research, prominent authors

Data-Driven School Improvement Series (2006). Six workbooks available through ets.org (see Pathwise Series or Leadership Resources). These workbooks are for training to create a framework for collecting and assessing data, driving school improvement, meeting NCLB challenges, and improving instruction in the classroom. See especially Workbook 3: Engaging in Action Research.

Improving Education Practice Through Data Use: Data-Driven Decision-Making

This website provides resources on data-driven decision-making, including reviews of software for analyzing student data. This site contains a variety of resources for helping educators and other researchers advance the practice of data-driven decision-making including such tools as state-based databases, student work analysis, and current research publications.

<http://edadmin.edb.utexas.edu/datause/index.htm>

Anderson, G., & Herr, K. (2007). Studying your own school (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press. (qualitative research)

Teacher Collaboration and Protocols for Looking at Data

Cushman, K. (1996). Looking collaboratively at student work: An essential toolkit. *Horace*, 13(2), 1-12.

Read at http://www.essentialschools.org/cs/resources/view/ces_res/57

Teachers come together to examine student work and use specific protocols to focus their discussion on the qualities of the work and what they can learn from it about their students and themselves. Cushman describes a "tuning protocol" that creates a ritual of presentation and response and provides structure for conversations among teachers.

Holcomb, E.L. (2004). Getting excited about data: Combining people, passion, and proof to maximize student achievement (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Murphy, C., & Lick, D.W. (2005). Whole-faculty study groups: Creating professional learning communities that target student learning (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Assessment


Sparks, D. (1998). Making assessment part of teacher learning. *Journal of Staff Development*, 19(4), 33-35. Read at <http://www.nsd.org/library/publications/jsd/joyce194.cfm> Dennis Sparks interviews Bruce Joyce regarding his advocacy for staff development that improves student learning. Joyce discusses the


importance of continuous adult learning, studying implementation, assessment as part of instruction, formative evaluation, and some barriers to implementation.


Marzano, R. (2006). *Classroom assessment and grading that work*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Drawing from years of in-depth research, Marzano provides you with guidelines and steps for designing a comprehensive assessment program that ensures that assessments and grades lead to timely, accurate feedback on specific, standards-based learning goals. Purchase at ASCD.org. Also available as an E-book. See also the Study Guide at <http://www.ascd.org/portal/site/ascd/template.chapter/menuitem.6b8e5ca7dd1e8e8cdeb3ffdb62108a0c/?chapterMgmtId=a5e68b0047730110VgnVCM1000003d01a8c0RCRD>

Web site "Library" of materials related to assessment at the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST)

CAPSTONE ASSIGNMENT

-  Interview a faculty member of a clearly successful school to determine how data are used and whether action research is carried out in that school. Prepare a report (2-3 pages; outline format is acceptable) about your interview. Sample questions:
1. Do faculty members participate collectively in planning for data use or action research? What is the mechanism for such participation?
 2. What are some examples of data use or action research that have been carried out?
 3. Are teachers allowed opportunities for professional interaction, discussion of ideas for instructional improvement, and reflective and collective thinking? How are such opportunities provided?
 4. (In your report, include your evaluation of the effectiveness of the data use in this school. What improvements can you suggest?)

 E-mail your Capstone Assignment (E-mail: jblase@uga.edu) to me so that it **arrives no later than the last week of the session**. *Don't worry or inquire about my receipt of the paper; if I am missing any papers at grading time, I will contact you personally!*

 I sincerely hope this course has enhanced your knowledge and skills for improving classroom and school-wide instruction. Remember—data, data, data!

Jo Blase

5/08

OPTIONAL: USEFUL BOOKS FOR YOUR PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP LIBRARY AND COURSEWORK

- Acheson, K. A., & Gall, M. D. (1992). *Techniques in the clinical supervision of teachers: Preservice and inservice applications* (3rd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2006). *Teachers bringing out the best in teachers: A guide to peer consultation for administrators and teachers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2004). *Handbook of instructional leadership* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Calhoun, E. F. (1994). *How to use action research in the self-renewing school*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

- Danielson, C. (1996). *Enhancing professional practice: A framework for teaching*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Joyce, B. & Calhoun, E. (1996). *Creating learning experiences: The role of instructional theory and research*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Joyce, B., & Showers, B. (1998). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Joyce, B., Weil, M., & Calhoun, E. (2000). *Models of teaching* (6th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Sullivan, S., & Glanz, J. (2005). *Supervision that improves teaching: Strategies and Techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Office Hours: By appointment. E-mail correspondence and telephone conversations are welcome.

General Information

As with all graduate level work, material submitted by students will be evaluated for completeness, appropriateness, creativity, and cohesiveness. The focus of any activity, discussion, and course assignment should derive from an educational leadership perspective. Clarity of writing and grammar will be considered in evaluation. Language used throughout this course should reflect sensitivity to issues of socioeconomic level, race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, special learning factors, etc. All work must be in APA format when appropriate; a 12-point font, one-inch margins, and double spacing are preferred but not necessary. Feel free to discuss any questions or concerns about the course assignments prior to the due date. If you have special needs, please discuss them with me as soon as possible.

Diversity Statement

Issues related to student diversity will be addressed in each of the courses in the Educational Leadership Program. This specifically means that issues related to differences in individuals and groups will be discussed. These include: concerns with the cultural backgrounds of learners, concerns with multiple learning styles and competencies of learners, and concerns with the variation in contexts from which learners come and in which schooling occurs. It is our understanding that differences in contexts result in differences in how parents, educators, and students view the world. Unless educators understand these differences and create programs that build on these differences, learners may be placed at risk of failure simply because of their differences. We believe that a respectful concern for diversity must be at the heart of every school leader's effort to improve "the opportunity to learn" for all students and adults. We will stress diversity issues and their significance in relationship to school leadership.

A Culture of Honesty

Per the UGA Honor Code and Academic Honesty Policy, all academic work must meet the standards contained in "A Culture of Honesty" All students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work.