

Educ. 407-5
***THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF IMPLEMENTATION:
MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF EDUCATIONAL CHANGE***

Instructor

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Seminar Dates and Locations

4:30 - 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise announced
Roberts Creek Elementary

September 13, 20, 27
October 11, 25
November 8, 22, 29

Purposes

Education 407-5 is a five-credit course that provides teachers with the opportunity to use their own classrooms as laboratories for exploring, analyzing and evaluating the processes of implementation and action inquiry. Theory and practice are linked through workshops, seminars and classroom action inquiry projects. The course is operated on a pass/withdraw basis. No grades will be assigned.

This specific course focuses on the implementation of new directions in education in British Columbia. The purposes of the course are to help practising teachers and administrators:

- a. Understand the base of theory and research in curriculum, child development, language learning and other fields from which current directions in education arise;
- b. Examine the beliefs, values and intentions reflected in current policy, program and curricular documents;
- c. Explore the practical implications of new program and curriculum directions by becoming familiar with a variety of instructional and evaluation strategies that support a developmental and learner-focussed approach to learning and teaching;
- d. Clarify personal beliefs about the teacher's role in programs that are based on a learner-focussed approach;
- e. Be able to articulate a rationale for using a developmental, learner-focussed approach in the classroom, supported with examples from current educational literature and classroom practices.

Course components

Workshops

The workshop component of the course will model a student-centered approach to instruction. Activities will include examination of:

- * current B.C. policy, program and curricular documents;
- * a developmental approach to teaching and learning based on current theory and research;
- * learning as a constructive, generative and collaborative process;
- * principles and criteria for educational decision-making based on a learner-focussed educational philosophy;
- * strategies for creating learner-focussed environments;
- * strategies for selecting, organizing and implementing appropriate instructional approaches for all students;
- * strategies for assessing and evaluating pupils, teachers and educational programs;
- * strategies for designing, implementing and evaluating a classroom-based action inquiry project.

Seminars

The seminar component of the course will provide a forum in which participants can support and learn from one another as they compare their self-directed learning projects. Seminars will provide opportunities for participants to reflect on their personal knowledge of children, teaching and learning, and how these change through the processes of action inquiry and reflective analysis.

Self-directed project

The classroom component of this course will involve the design and implementation of a project in which participants investigate the use of specific practices that are congruent with current educational policies and programs. A format for project design will be provided.

Participants will be asked to document and evaluate changes in their understanding and teaching practices throughout the semester. Evaluation for university credit will be based primarily on a portfolio submitted at the end of the coursework which represents the participant's work and evaluates their learning.

Self-directed project guidelines

The action inquiry project provides an opportunity for you to focus on one aspect of your professional growth, and to consciously and deliberately develop your classroom practices in that area. The process of designing, implementing and evaluating the project is your major assignment for Education 407.

Each participant will develop an individualized project plan with support from colleagues and the instructor. The choice of focus area, goal and level of challenge is expected to vary from individual to individual depending on background, previous experience and current situations.

Choosing a focus area and a goal for the project

Perhaps the most difficult part of this assignment will be selecting the particular aspect of your classroom program that you would most like to develop or change during the course. Some questions to keep in mind when selecting your project focus are:

- a. Will I learn something new and worthwhile from the project?
- b. Will the project help me become a better facilitator of students' development in the focus area?
- c. Is my focus area worthy of a significant investment of time and energy?
- d. Is my goal clear enough that I can identify specific practices I want to try?
- e. Is my project manageable within the time frame of the inservice course?
- f. Have I tried to anticipate problems that might arise during implementation and how I might deal with them?

Developing a project plan

The project plan should include a list of the activities you will undertake and, where appropriate, a timeline. Your plan may include background reading or research into instructional strategies as well as a classroom implementation overview. It should also indicate what signs you will look for to indicate that you have moved toward your goal. A format for your project plan will be provided by the course instructor.

Setting up a support system

Although each teacher will engage in an individualized project, colleagues can provide invaluable support in the form of encouragement, specific suggestions, empathy during times of challenge, problem-solving ideas, and constructive feedback. As part of your plan you will be asked to identify a small support group with whom you will regularly discuss the planning, implementation and evaluation process.

Implementing the project

Your project plan provides a guide to direct your action inquiry efforts during the course. However, you may find that as you try new practices, you need to make modifications in the plan in response to unanticipated events along the way. It is expected that your plan may change during implementation. Your reflective journal should document what actually happens during the implementation phase, as well as your analysis of what you are learning from the experiences. Your instructor will be available during class sessions to discuss your experiences, and your support group will also help you deal with challenges you may encounter.

Monitoring the project

At the end of the course you will be asked to summarize what you have learned from the project. You should be prepared to discuss its effects on your classroom practices and your students as well as on your own learning. A well-kept reflective journal should provide much of the data for your self-evaluation of the project.

Preparing the portfolio

Your summary at the end of the course will take the form of a portfolio which represents what the course experiences have meant for you in terms of learning and growth. The portfolio may consist of a variety of carefully-selected items which represent your journey through the project or illustrate some important aspects of your activities. The portfolio should also include a letter or other document for the instructor which explains what the portfolio items represent and why you have chosen them, and which summarizes your learning and growth.