

Rhode Island College
Feinstein School of Education and Human Development
Department of Educational Studies

SED 551: Inquiry into Classroom Practice

Course Information

Prerequisites: Admission to the M.ED. in Advanced Studies in Teaching and Learning, or consent of department chair.

Catalog Description: In this first course in the MED core, students engage in the systematic inquiry of teaching and learning within educational settings, as an essential part of becoming a reflective practitioner.

**Relationship to
Professional Program:**

Inquiry into Classroom Practice is the first course in the core course sequence for the M.Ed. in Secondary Education. In addition to advanced study toward a Masters degree, this unique M.Ed. program features instructional support for teachers seeking *National Board Certification*. The Core Courses are aligned with the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) which seeks to identify and recognize teachers who effectively enhance student learning and demonstrate the high level of knowledge, skills, abilities and commitments reflected in the following five core propositions:

1. Teachers are committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.
3. Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning
4. Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience
5. Teachers are members of learning communities.

In *SED 551*, in-service teachers are introduced to the process of systematic inquiry into teaching and learning. Methods of academic research are introduced and practiced in the context of the course and are discussed in relation to a select research project. The readings provide samples of studies of teaching and learning exemplifying both the form and content of student projects. Literature reviews and research designs are considered in relation to each student's interests and research project.

Course Texts and Materials

Required:

- Hubbard and Power, *The Art of Classroom Inquiry* (2003)
- Articles from NETWORKS online teacher research journal:
<http://education.ucsc.edu/faculty/gwells/networks/>

Course Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

		CF: Advanced Competencies	NBPTS	RIPTS
1	Analyze research in the field of education in order to apply it to their own instructional and classroom practices	K 1 (Domain-specific knowledge); K 2 (Information literacy); K 3 (Contextual perspective)	1 — Teachers are committed to students and their learning, 4 — Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience	1 – General Knowledge, 4 – Diversity
2	Conduct research in their own classroom as a mode of planning, action and reflection	K 2 (Information literacy); P 1 (Evidenced-based decision making); K 3 (Contextual perspective); P 3 (Diversity of practice).	1 — Teachers are committed to students and their learning, 3 — Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning, 4 — Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience	5 – Thinking & Prob. Solving, 6 – Learning Environment, 11– Prof. Standards
3	Work in research partnerships to promote collegial support networks in the process of teacher research	K 4 (Professional awareness); P 4 (Professional identity development)	5 — Teachers are members of learning communities	7 – Collaboration, 8 – Communication

Course Requirements

- **“Rich Description:” Week-long Teacher Journal**

Keep a journal of your daily life in the classroom for one week. The journal should be approximately *6-10 pages* long (typed, double-spaced). Half of your Teacher Journal paper should focus on the descriptive details about the layout of the space, the architecture, the classroom decorations, the student body and other class members, the smells and sounds... What do you see? The second half of the Teacher Journal should be a true “journal” of your week in the classroom. Try writing for about 10 minutes a day in order to capture the patterns, events and activities that you witness in your classroom. Per Hubbard and Power’s suggestion, if you get stuck, just write, “I remember in class today...” and keep going. Think of Hankins’ journal entries and advice about journaling for more suggestions. At the end of the week, as you pull everything together to hand in, these rememberings will help you begin to develop some potential research questions that you might pursue over the course of the semester.
- **Research Proposals**

The Research Proposal will help focus your project around a particular research question. It should be approximately 2-3 pages long and should include a short introduction describing the process by which you came to this question, the question itself, and a brief sketch of how you plan to go about collecting data to reflect upon this question. See the examples from Hubbard and Power’s Appendix for some models.
- **Three sets of data**

Once you have established a research question, you will need to collect data to help you understand what this question means and what possible “answers” might exist. While you may collect your data in the form of stickie notes, handwritten journals, interviews, student work, photographs, etc, each data set you turn in must be typed up in the form of fieldnotes, memos or interview transcripts. They should be rich in description and should include your “observer comments” throughout the transcript. We will discuss the process of writing up the data in class.
- **Literature review**

In order to situate your research question in a broader context, you will need to conduct a literature review on your area of inquiry. What is the conversation that researchers are having around this topic? What have others found that will help inform your study? And ultimately, how does your voice fit into the conversation? Your literature review should be approximately 5 pages in length, and should include at least five sources.
- **Memo on Emerging Themes**

Teacher research is data-driven. That means that any claims that you make need to come from the data you have collected. Your goal is to convince your reader that what you say is compelling. So, as you begin looking through your data, what do you see? In a 3-5 page memo, discuss three areas of interest that could be the center of your research findings. For each theme, you should write approximately one paragraph to describe how you are thinking about the theme and then give several examples from your data to support it. This is a space for exploratory talk about these issues. It will be the skeleton of your final project write up and is meant to help you sort out your ideas.
- **Research Presentations: Peer Support and Feedback**

In the last two weeks of the semester, we will dedicate the seminar meeting to student presentations. Each student will have 10-20 minutes to present his or her research to the class and solicit feedback from the seminar group. We will talk more about this in class nearer to the end of the semester.
- **Final Research Project Write-Up**

Your final project for this class should be a 15-20 page paper that lays out your research question and findings. Some of the articles we have read will provide possible models for organization and analysis. See rubric for expectations.

Performance Assessments

	Outcomes	CF: Advanced Competencies	NBPTS	RIPTS
Teacher Journal	2	K 2, 3, 4; P1, 3, 4.	4	5, 6, 11
Research Proposal	2	K 1, 2, 3, 4; P 1, 3, 4.	1,4	5, 6, 11
Data Sets	2	K 2, 3; P 1, 2, 3.	1, 3, 4	5, 6, 11
Literature Review	1	K 1, 3	1,2,4	1, 4
Memo on Emerging Themes	1, 2	K 1, 3; P 3, 4.	1,3,4	1, 4
Research Presentations	2, 3	K 2, 4; P 2, 4.	4,5	8, 9
Final Research Project Write-Up	1, 2, 3	K 1, 2, 3, 4; P 1, 2, 3, 4.	1,2,3,4,5	1, 4, 5, 6

Course Evaluation

- Assessment of individual assignments will include extensive written feedback, but no letter grade in order to encourage risk and allow for practice of new teacher research skills
- Participation in class (50%)
- Strength of your final project (50%)

Course Grading

The grading scale for this course follows the standards set in the Rhode Island College catalog.

NAME: _____

Semester: _____

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Final Project Rubric

	Exceptional 5	Strong 4	Adequate 3	Needs Improv. 2	Absent 1	NOTES
INTRODUCTION: Offers an inviting introduction to the research question						
ARGUMENT: Makes an argument based on the data collected						
METHODS/METHODOLOGY: Explains the process and procedures of the project. Includes reflections on struggles and successes along the way.						
THEMES: Supports the argument statement with clearly articulated themes from the data						
DATA-DRIVEN CLAIMS Uses data to substantiate themes — data should be rich and descriptive in order to convince the reader that your interpretation is compelling						
ANALYSIS: Offers analysis of the data in your own voice to explain <i>how</i> the data supports the theme. Don't expect data to speak for themselves.						
LITERATURE: Uses relevant literature to support the topic at hand						
CONCLUSION: Summarizes discussion and offers suggestions for future research						
WRITING: Organization and style						
WRITING: Grammar, structure and conventions						
OVERALL: Project offers evidence of reflective practice						