05.650/201 Instructional Leadership and School Reform  
Graduate School of Education  
University of Massachusetts-Lowell  
Fall 2011  
Mondays, 4-6:320 PM  

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Course Overview  
*History is not kind to idlers.* –The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983)  

The 1983 report *A Nation at Risk* generated an abundance of school reform activity in the three decades that followed its release. Efforts to improve U.S. public schools ranged from more rigorous curriculum, longer school days, restructuring, site based management, and teacher empowerment initiatives to increased time for instructional planning and preparation, differentiated roles for teachers, teaming, and alternative assessment. Yet, the quest for large scale improvement proved elusive because reform efforts failed to meaningfully consider the single most important factor in facilitating student learning and achievement—the practice of teaching. This course provides students with the theoretical and empirical bases for understanding effective classroom instruction and the processes by which effective instructional practice can be brought to scale at the school and district levels. Today’s school leaders cannot be leaders of instruction simply in a rhetorical sense. Rather, they must have deep, substantive knowledge of the instructional core and the ability to create the conditions needed for high quality teaching and learning to occur in their schools and districts.

Graduate School of Education Conceptual Framework  
The mission of the University of Massachusetts Lowell is to enhance the intellectual, personal and cultural development of its students through excellent, affordable educational programs. The University seeks to meet the needs of the Commonwealth today and into the future and supports the development of sustainable technologies and communities through its teaching, research, scholarship and engagement. The Graduate School of Education (GSE) contributes to this mission by developing professionals who help transform the region and beyond through leadership roles in education. Through this course, the GSE’s commitment to “Education for Transformation” produces graduates who:  
1) demonstrate instructional leadership by applying their professional knowledge, judgment, and skill in their respective organizations;  
2) promote equity of educational opportunity for all learners by improving the quality of instruction in their respective organizations;  
3) collaborate with other educators, parents, and community representatives to place instructional improvement at the forefront of reform efforts and, in doing so, support educational excellence;  
4) use inquiry and research around issues of practice to address educational challenges; and  
5) have the ability to create productive dialogue about instructional practice and student learning in order to transform relationships among people in schools, mobilizing them to accomplish purposes their shared values.
Scope of the Course and Class Format
This course is grounded in three fundamental assumptions about leadership and instructional improvement. First, leaders must be able to use empirical evidence and structured dialogue as tools for improvement. Throughout the semester students will become skilled observers of classroom practice who establish a shared language that facilitates discussion of classroom teaching as a common “text.” Second, because leaders must be able to make hard decisions based on limited information in ambiguous situations, this course is grounded in the case method approach to teaching and learning. Derived from real events, cases immerse students in the conflicts and challenges they will face as leaders in their organizations. Students will be presented with cases about school improvement in which they take on the role of decision maker (or protagonist). As such, they will identify the problem they are faced with, examine the causes, consider courses of action, and make and defend recommendations. Finally, effective leaders have a working knowledge of relevant theory which helps them make sense of their organizations. Students will therefore be asked to apply theory in their interpretations and discussions of cases, observations and analyses of teaching, and research and presentations on school improvement efforts.

The success of this course is contingent upon thoughtful, engaged participation of all class members. Students should come to class well-prepared to discuss all readings and take part in class workshop activities.

Course Assignments
Students will be expected to complete the following assignments, which will be explained in detail as the class proceeds:

1. Analysis of Teaching: Students will complete an analysis of one teacher’s practice. This will require an observation of and interview with the teacher. The final product will be an 8-10 page paper. The guidelines for this assignment will be presented and discussed in class.
2. Case Analysis: Students will analyze a case and prepare an 8-10 page case-based essay. The guidelines for this assignment will be presented and discussed in class.
3. Policy White Paper: Students will argue a specific position or propose a solution to a problem related to the teacher quality/effectiveness debate.
4. Final Project: Students will choose a topic of their choice related to school improvement to research and critique. Final products will include a 20-25 page literature review and a brief (8-10 minute) presentation to the class. The guidelines for this assignment will be presented and discussed in class.

Papers will be read and returned within two weeks of submission. Late papers will be automatically reduced by one-half letter grade (for example, from B+ to B) for the first day of lateness. They will be reduced another letter grade for each additional day after the due date. Exceptions are granted only in the case of true emergencies or under unusual circumstances, if arranged with the instructor prior to the due date.
### Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-class participation</th>
<th>15 points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Teaching</td>
<td>20 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Analysis</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<td>Policy White Paper</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>35 points</td>
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<tr>
<th>Point Structure</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>GPA</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>99-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Work of the highest professional standard demonstrating independent and exemplary performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96-98</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Excellent work demonstrating independent and high quality performance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>91-95</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Very good work, indicating consistent and careful thought and attention to the task, but requiring some areas of improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Good work, carefully executed for the most part, yet requiring several areas of improvement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-85</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Work of graduate standard, but omissions exist or careful analysis is not evident.</td>
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Required Texts

Schedule of Topics and Readings

**Session 1 (9/12): Framing the Policy Debate**
Introductions and opening remarks
Course syllabus

**Session 2 (9/19): Educational Leadership and Instructional Improvement**
Discussion: How do visioning, goal setting, strategic planning, and supervision affect the implementation of instructional improvement reforms? Does engagement in these processes lead to higher rates of successful reform (i.e., better teaching and learning)?
Readings:
Case: NYC District 2 (R. Elmore) [CW]
Overview Assignment #1: Observation and Analysis of Teaching [HO]

**Session 3 (9/26): School Leadership and Instructional practice**
Discussion: What, if anything, do school leaders need to know about the practice of teaching?
Readings:
Session 4 (10/3): School Leadership and Conditions for Improvement

Discussion: How, if at all, can school leaders create conditions for improved teaching and learning?

Readings:


Case: South River [CW] Video: The Pearl

Session 5 (10/10) On-Line Session: School Leadership and Conditions for Improvement

Discussion: How, if at all, can school leaders create conditions for improved teaching and learning?

Readings and activities: TBA

Session 6 (10/17): School Leadership and Conditions for Improvement

Discussion: How, if at all, can school leaders create conditions for improved teaching and learning?


Case: The Turn-Around at Highland Elementary School [CW]

Assignment #1 due
Overview of Final Paper

Session 7 (10/24): School Leadership and Conditions for Improvement
Discussion: How, if at all, can school leaders create and sustain conditions for improved teaching and learning?
Readings:

Little, J.W. (2002). “Locating learning in teachers' professional community: Opening up problems of analysis in records of everyday work.” *Teaching and Teacher Education* 18 (8), 917-946. [HO]


Case: Souhegan HS (Silva & Mackin) [HO]

Session 8 (10/31): School Leadership and Conditions for Improvement
Discussion: How, if at all, can school leaders create conditions for improved teaching and learning?
Readings:

Case: Deer Park Middle School [HO]
Video: Data Wise

Overview of Assignment #2: Case Analysis

Session 9 (11/7): School Leadership and Conditions for Improvement
Discussion: How, if at all, can school leaders create conditions for improved teaching and learning?
Readings:


Case: Montgomery County [CW]

Session 10 (11/14): District Leadership and Conditions for Improvement
Discussion: How, if at all, can district leaders create conditions for improved teaching and learning?
Case: Duval County, FL
Readings:
TBA
Assignment #2 due

Session 11 (11/20): District Leadership and Conditions for Improvement
Discussion: How, if at all, can district leaders create conditions for improved teaching and learning?
Case: TBA
Readings: TBA

Session 12 (11/21): District Leadership and Conditions for Improvement
Discussion: How, if at all, can district leaders create conditions for improved teaching and learning?
Readings:
Case: Focusing on Results at the NYC Department of Education [CW]
Video: Joel Klein

Session 13 (11/28): (Tentative) District Leadership and Conditions for Improvement
Discussion: How, if at all, can school leaders create conditions for improved teaching and learning?
Readings:
Case: Managing the Chicago Public Schools

Session 14 (12/5) Course Retrospective and Final Paper Consultancies

Final Paper due TBD