LAMAR UNIVERSITY

Week 1 Assignment

Overview

Welcome to EDLD 5301, an Action Research course. The course has been designed to further address your transformational leadership skills as you engage stakeholders in an effort to make a dramatic difference in the lives of students, staff and the community as you prepare them for life in our ever increasing diverse global village. The professors are committed to helping you learn the skills to conduct action research that will improve your campus, district and larger community throughout your participation in this program, and more importantly, provide the knowledge and skills to continue applied research as part of your lifelong learning and professional development.

As most of you know from your experiences and expertise, there are no programs, and for sure no single product, that can solve all of the conflicts and problems, or even address all of the issues faced everyday in our public schools. You also know that our Lamar program has focused on developing leadership knowledge and skills that we sometimes say need to be in your "leadership toolbox" to help you improve your campus, district, and self. Two of the resources that we selected for your leadership toolbox are the texts for this course, *Leading with passion and knowledge: The Principal as Action Research* by Nancy Fichtman Dana, and *Examining what we do to improve our schools: 8 steps from analysis to action* by Sandra Harris, Stacey Edmonson, and Julie Combs. We will reference these texts as the Dana text and the Harris et al. text. There are many action research education texts, and we have listed some of those, along with other resources, in the Resource section of this course. But we think these books will be excellent sources to help us achieve our larger goal. That goal is expressed succinctly by Michael Fullan in the Foreword to this text. Commenting on the value of action research texts, Fullan states:

Dana has produced a book steeped in passion and strategy that makes action research not an ad hoc project but, rather, a way of life. This project is not a linear one. It is about becoming and continually cultivating what it means to become the best possible leader you can, (Dana, 2009, p. x).

Harris, Edmondson and Combs state:

These (8) action steps provide a framework for examining school improvement that is an ongoing thoughtful evaluation of the work. We believe that when this framework is implemented, schools can be improved, (Harris, Edmonson, and Combs, 2010, p. xvi).

We hope you can sense we feel passionate about this action research initiative and the value to you as a leader! As an overview, we hope to address the following in Week One:

Learning Outcomes:

1) Understand the nature and purpose of practitioner inquiry and action research.

2) Know the benefits of action research for campus or district leaders.

3) Be familiar with the steps to develop a blog and share action research progress.

4) Understand the importance of using "reflective techniques" to enrich communication on the blog and in monitoring the action research project.

Performance Outcomes:

1) Examine definitions of practitioner inquiry, action and applied research and write a definition of action research that is a synthesis of these definitions.

2) Review examples of action research in educational settings and provide a written analysis of the benefits of action research.

3) Develop a blog focusing on sharing information and insights on the action research project and communicate to other students the needed information for accessing the blog.

4) Using the blog, engage in reflective practice and share what is being learned about your action research plan, process, and progress. Submit comments to at least three other class member's blogs.

Rubric

Use the following Rubric to guide your work on the Week 1 Assignment.

Tasks	Accomplished The evidence suggests that this work is a "Habit of Mind." The educator is ready to mentor others in this area.	Proficient The evidence suggests that performance on this work matches that of a strong educator.	Needs Improvement The evidence does not yet make the case for the educator being proficient at this task.
Why do action research?	Student clearly answers both questions thoroughly, and answers reflect reference to the readings. (3 Points)	Student answers both questions, but does not provide any indication of applying the readings to the responses. (2 Points)	Student answers only one question and does not provide any indication of applying the reading to the answer. (1 Point)
Identifying action research in educational settings	Student clearly identifies three examples of action research in educational settings and provides a thorough response describing the benefits of action research. (3 Points)	Student identifies only two examples of action research in educational settings and responds with a brief description of the benefits of action research. (2 Points)	Student incompletely responds to the two activities – either does not identify 3 examples or fails to describe the benefits of action research, but the student does make some response, although incomplete. (1 Point)
Action Research Blog	Student follows directions on building a blog, posts the blog name and URL address; writes at least a 200 word description of what the student has learned about action research; and describes how leaders can use blogs. (3 Points)	Student does **two** of the following: • Creates a blog with name and URL address • Writes a 200 word description of what he or she has learned about action research • Describes how leaders can use blogs (2 Points)	Student does **one** of the following: • Creates a blog with name and URL address • Writes a 200 word description of what he or she has learned about action research • Describes how leaders can use blogs (1 Point)
Reflection in Action Research	Student clearly answers both questions thoroughly, and answers reflect reference to the readings. (3 Points)	Student answers both questions, but does not provide any indication of applying the readings to the responses, or only partially answers one of	Student answers only one question and does not provide any indication of applying the readings to the answer.

		the questions. (2 Points)	(1 Point)
Assignment Mechanics	Responses are relevant to course content; no errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. (3 Points)	Responses are relevant to course content; few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. (2 Points)	Responses do not reflect knowledge of course content, lack clarity and depth, and/or include multiple errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. (1 Point)

Week One Assignment, Part 1 – Why do action research?

Based on the reading from the Dana text, pp. 1 – 15 and Harris et al., pp. 5 - 7, answer the following questions:

1. What is administrative inquiry or action research?
2. How does action research differ from traditional educational research?

Type in your answers in the box below. The box will expand as you type.

Action research is studying a systematic method of identifying a problem, collect data about the problem, implement an action of change based on the data that has been gathered, observe the change and gather new data in order to reflect on the level of impact the changes made. With action research, you become involved with problem, and work with others as a collaborative problem solving group. By following a systematic approach, you can focus on each step in solving the problem without jumping to a conclusion too soon or too fast.

Action research differs from traditional educational research in which outside experts have researched types of solutions to similar problems and your organization chooses to use the outside organizations solution to apply to the problem at hand in hopes that it will solve or improve the problem. This solution provides a band aid approach to problem solving with the risk that the problem may become worse. In return it makes those involved in solving the problem appear less knowledgable of the problem and less concerned about fixing it.

As an administrator or teacher involved in action research you are able to be involved in the learning process that will be used to make your educational environment better. You become part of the solution by learning about the problems at hand, reflecting on what you know about your educational institution in regards to staff, students, and administration and implementing a solution that best fits your environment. Most importantly you are able to review data based on changes and reflect on those solutions in order to make adjustments and make further changes.

Week One Assignment, Part 2 – How does action research work in educational settings?

From the Dana text, What are some contexts that are ripe for principal inquiry?, pp. 19 – 25, and the article, Action research: An Effective Instructional Leadership Skill for Future Public School Leaders, answer the following questions:

1. Give at least three examples of action research in educational settings.

2. Describe the benefits of conducting action research.

Type in your answers in the box below. The box will expand as you type.

There are four unique contexts that are described in the Dana text. University coursework, Superintendant / District meetings, leadership teams, and professional learning teams. At Maypearl High School leadership teams appear to be our primary focus in which action research takes place. This may be due to our small district size. From curriculum planning to revamping the student handbook, there is usually a leadership team involved in making changes. Often these leadership teams include all members of the community from parents, students, teachers, and administration. With this structure our school has the ability to improve on itselve with action research by working in small groups to implement ideas, observe how they work and then reflect on the actions that took place.

Secondly, we utilize meeting that involve the Superintendant. This is extremely easy for us again because of the small size of our district. From meeting at the administration building or meeting at one of the campuses that are all located next to each other. Often ideas are discussed and put into place and the superintendant is very involved with coming to the campuses and seeing how ideas that are being implemented are working.

The third way we are starting to implement action research is with teachers involved in University Coursework. Currently we have a minimum of four teachers involved with Lamar University. Two in the Administrative Leadership Program, and two in the Technology Leadership Program. We all teach on the same section of the building. This has allowed us to begin working and sharing ideas in our own group. A number of ideas are shared and often, put into place and we share how they worked. While these are not large events, we are testing small theories that we have as students with assistance of our principal and vice principal.

Week One Assignment, Part 3 – Building a Blog on Action Research*

Some of you may have built a blog in EDLD 5352, or in another context. We wish to thank Dr. Kay Abernathy, Associate Professor and Coordinator of the Ed Tech Leadership Master's at Lamar, for helping us to learn to build blogs. In this course, we are requiring you to build a blog where you can share your action research project and progress, as well as learn from reading others' blogs on action research. To accomplish building a blog, we ask that you:

- Access the video, "Blogs in Plain English" by entering the following address in your web address bar: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NN2I1pWXjXI

- View "Blogs in Plain English" as preparation for this assignment.

- Enter the following address in your web address bar: www.blogger.com.

- Read the information about the site.

- Click "Create a Blog." Complete the information required to use the site, including the selection of a username and password. (If you already have a Google account, you can enter your username and password at the top of the home page.) Check the box to accept the terms of service, and click "Continue" to move to the next step.

- After creating your blog account, click "Name Blog."

- Select a title for the blog (example: Jo Ann's Action Research Journeys or something a little more creative) and a blog address URL (example: http://yourname.blogspot.com). Click "Continue" to move to the next step, "Choose a Template."

- Choose a template for your blog, then click "Continue."

- When the "Your Blog Has Been Created" screen appears, click "Start Blogging."

- On the screen provided, write a description of what you have learned about action research and how you might be able to use it. This description should be at least 200 words.

- Next write an analysis of how educational leaders might use blogs – 25 words or more are recommended.

- Also, read your Dana text, Data Collection Strategy 7: Reflective Journals and/or Blogs, pp. 87 – 89

- ***Note on Blog Sharing:** The Dana text also discusses the power of sharing action research projects and progress on pages 149 – 151, and offers the following link to educational blogs: **http:**//supportblogging.com/Links+to+School+Bloggers

- Be sure to post your blog information below:

Your Blog's Name	Your Blog's URL
Michael C. Warren – Technology and Education	http://michaelcwarren.net/
EDLD 5301 Week 1 – Action Research Project	http://michaelcwarren.net/2010/07/14/edld-5301-week-1-action-research-project/
Blog Usage	http://michaelcwarren.net/2010/07/14/edld-5301-week-1-blog-usage/

Week One Assignment, Part 4 Reflection in Action

From the Dana text, please read, How do I find time to engage in inquiry as a principal?, pp. 15 – 19, and from your EDLD 5311 text, *School leadership internship,* 2nd edition, read Reflection in Action, pp. 104 – 107, and answer the following:

Describe why reflection is an important skill in leadership. Why is reflection an important aspect of action research?

Type in your answers in the box below. The box will expand as you type.

Reflection is important in action research as it allows those involved to analyze the data and results that have come from putting an action into place. If school administration does not take time to reflect, then they become less involved in the outcome. If they are less involved in implementing and don't reflect on the actions teachers, staff and administration may question the individuals leadership if results are negative.

By scheduling regular time to reflect, you allow action research to become part of your regular activities. This in turn will keep it part of your scheduled activities and hopefully keep you involved with other individuals that are part of the project. This interaction shows better leadership in running the department or organization.