

October 31, 2007

Re: New course proposal: Action Research in Schools and Communities

From: Department of Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry (proposed working department name), Interim Chair, Dr. Suzanne Lapp

To: College of Education Department Chairs, Associate Deans, Dean

Our newly formed department recently reviewed this proposed course syllabus and unanimously approved this application for a new course at the 6000 level (number tba) called Action Research in Schools and Communities. We request your approval of this course to be offered by the newly formed Department of Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry.

A special topics section of this course has been offered twice, initially at the request of the Henderson Research Committee (now the University Schools Research Committee), under the leadership of Dr. Ira Bogotch. With the University Schools' continuing interest in supporting research with and by teachers, the Committee agreed that an action research course would be useful and timely, and FAU Schools Director, Glen Thomas agreed. Dr. Nancy Brown, Director of the Center for Early Childhood Education, Research, and Community Partnerships (CECERCP) in the College of Education also noted the importance of such a course. The Toppel Institute of Early Childhood initiative, recently funded by the Toppel Family Foundation, supports the goal of developing a research base at the Slattery Early Child Development Center as part of the professional identity of teachers at the Center. An Action Research course would support the teacher professional development at Slattery as well as Pine Jog, Traditions, and Henderson.

An Action Research course is also consistent with the goals and directions of the 6 counties served by Florida Atlantic University. Palm Beach County and Broward County, in particular, offer online versions of an Action Research course. A course from FAU is both appropriate and supportive of district initiatives. In addition, action research is a component of the Florida Association of Staff Development (FASD) Standards for all teachers in the state, (<http://www.fasdonline.org/links.htm>) and directly addresses the research standards from the National Staff Development Council (<http://www.nsd.org/standards/index.cfm>).

The course provides participants with an opportunity to read and critique action research by administrators and practitioners; readings also provide them with historical and theoretical frameworks for action research, situating it in the larger domain of social science educational research. It is primarily a design course in which participants develop an action research question or questions, do a brief literature review that informs their question(s), and prepare an IRB application for submission to FAU. It also provides background and structural support for teachers and administrators who are interested in conference presentations and writing for publication, viewing their action research projects as possible means to become more active members of their professional communities.

We propose that the action research course initially be offered every other year in the spring semester and would be considered an elective. We believe that this course is a valuable addition to the electives available to masters and doctoral students in Curriculum and Instruction as well as to practitioners in our FAU University Schools and districts who are now actively encouraged to participate in and conduct research. Pending approval by the College and University, we will further consider the course's specific role in the Masters in Curriculum and Instruction, which

currently has no capstone experience. (NCATE has noted that we should be moving toward capstones in our masters programs.)