

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**  
**PROBLEMS AND METHODS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH—EDRS 810**  
Spring 2004

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**Schedule Information**

**Location:** PACE West, Haymarket, VA

**Meeting Times:** Tuesdays, January 6 – May 11. This class meets inside the 5:00 – 9:00 time frame, but dates and times vary. Please see the combined EDLE 803 and EDRS calendar at the end of the syllabus. If you have a personal problem that will prevent you from attending class, please contact me by telephone or e-mail.

**Course Description**

**Course Delivery**

**Course Goals**

*Teaching and Learning:*

1. Each class will mirror as much as possible the real world of a school administrator and will reflect good management. I expect that we will:
  - start and end on time;
  - maintain and follow a written agenda for each class;
  - listen first to understand, then seek to be understood; and
  - work toward common goals in a professional and cordial manner.
  
2. Every student product will as closely as possible reflect what would be expected from a school administrator. Consequently, students will:

- write short analyses, often in memo form;
  - present data in a clear, readable format;
  - run meetings that range in size from one-on-one to 20; and
  - participate in role playing and other interactive activities, consider the experience, and communicate about the experience.
3. Writing is a vital activity for any school administrator. Therefore, I will emphasize the process of writing so that students will achieve the following objectives:
- Students will develop greater confidence in their ability to write expository, analytical and persuasive prose.
  - Students will learn how to review their own work and the work of others to eliminate errors and maximize clarity.
  - Students will produce written products immune to criticism from a skeptical public.

*Classroom Climate:*

Our classroom must be a place in which we can try out new ideas and take risks free from the fear of embarrassment. We must be able to look at each other's work critically so that we may all receive valuable feedback that will help us to do our jobs better in the future. Therefore, I expect a commitment from all of us to:

1. be fully prepared for each class session;
2. respect and care about one another as human beings;
3. work toward a common purpose;
4. persevere through common challenges; and
5. affirm one another's successes and help one another overcome weaknesses.

*Professional Development:*

I see this course in a context larger than the boundaries of its content. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind goals for each student's administrative career. This course is part of a larger picture of administrator training that seeks to develop the student to be:

1. a thoughtful, wise administrator;
2. a careful, decisive decision maker;
3. the kind of person who can understand detail and the big picture simultaneously;
4. a supervisor, an assistant principal, a principal, and/or a superintendent capable of visionary school leadership; and
5. a strong colleague who will be a valued member of any team.
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## **Student Outcomes**

At the conclusion of this course, successful students should be able to:

## **Course Materials**

### *Readings*

Maxwell, J.A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

This course may also involve readings from various journals that will be distributed in class.

### *Classroom Materials*

I expect all students to maintain a binder that contains all readings, reading notes, class notes, student products, and class handouts. The binder will probably need to have at least 2-inch rings.

### *Outside-of-Class Resources*

All students are required to use <http://blackboard.gmu.edu> as part of this course. This is an Internet site at which I will post vital information for the course and through which we will communicate from time to time. This site will be particularly important if we experience school shutdowns because of the weather. Consequently, I expect all students to have access to a personal computer that is linked to the Internet and the ability to use word processing software.

## **Grading**

Students' grades are based on their proficiency with respect to the student outcomes stated above. Each outcome will have an oral (class participation) and/or a written component. The outcomes are weighted as described below:

<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>ORAL</b>	<b>WRITTEN</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
Students will understand the historical, philosophical, and sociological contexts in which public		Students will write a white paper that places into historical, philosophical, and/or sociological context an actual decision made in	15

schools in the U.S. find themselves today.		their school or school division.	
Students will apply principles of organization theory to practical problems in school administration.	Students will engage in simulations that require organizational analysis to persuade others to implement a specific solution.*	Students will write a paper analyzing an actual decision from one or more organizational perspectives.	(10) + 15
Experience major roles and responsibilities of school-site administrators.	Students will engage in role-playing and/or discussion based on real-world scenarios.*		(10)
Students will assess the impact of school and community cultures and pressure groups.	Students will participate in team discussions about pressure groups and how to respond to them.	Students will write a school/community collaborative plan that addresses an authentic need at the school or division level.	(10) + 5
<b>OUTCOME</b>	<b>ORAL</b>	<b>WRITTEN</b>	<b>POINTS</b>
Students will articulate personal philosophies of education and leadership.	Students will engage in class discussion/debate about core values most important to education.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students will write critiques of their schools' vision and/or mission statements.</li> <li>2. Students will write a statement of their personal educational philosophy appropriate to an application for an administrative position.</li> </ol>	(5) + 10 + 10
Students will be ready to implement a practical and challenging Internship Plan.		Students will write an Internship Plan approved by the University Supervisor.	15
Students will communicate more clearly and persuasively.	Students will engage in classroom activities during each class session.		(5)

Below are the basic percentages for the various kinds of work required for the class, but students should always bear in mind that grading is primarily my judgment about your performance. Grades are designed to indicate your success in completing the course, not the level of effort you put into it.

Class participation	percent
Writing assignments	percent
Internship Plan	percent

### *Participation*

You should anticipate making at least one oral contribution in every class session. I expect each student to take an active role in discussion and/or role-playing whenever opportunities present themselves. If you are absent or miss part of a class session, you may lose participation points. **If you are absent for an oral activity listed above, you will not receive credit for that activity.**

### *Absence From Class*

Students are expected to attend every class for its entirety. Emergencies sometimes arise, however. If you need to be absent from class, I expect you to notify me in advance by telephone or e-mail. If you miss more than one class, you will lose participation points. If you come to class more than 30 minutes late or leave more than 30 minutes early, you will lose participation points. Papers due on a day you are absent **must be submitted via e-mail or fax by the due date.**

### *Writing*

Writing assignments will be made approximately every two weeks during the semester. Assignment titles appear at the end of this syllabus. Detailed assignment sheets and assessment rubrics will be distributed via Blackboard.

### *Late Work*

I expect students to submit their work on time. **I will not accept any work later than one week after it is due.** Any attempt to submit work past the one-week deadline will result in no credit for the assignment.

Students may revise and re-submit graded work to improve their performance. Such revisions are due **not later than one week after** receiving my feedback on the previous draft. I may re-consider an assignment grade, but I will not negotiate grades with students.

### *Grading Scale*

A	=	95 – 100 percent
A-	=	90 – 94 percent
B+	=	85 –89 percent
B	=	80 – 84 percent
C	=	75 – 79 percent
F	=	74 percent or below

**GMU Honor Code:**

Students are expected to abide by the George Mason University Honor Code. Violations (such as cheating, attempted cheating, plagiarizing, lying, stealing) will be reported to the Honor Committee. Please refer to the University Catalog or [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu) for the full Honor Code. Ignorance of the code is not a defense.

**Weekly Topics, Reading Assignments, and Writing Assignments**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
January 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• What is research and how does it differ from other writing?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Be prepared to discuss how your literature is helping you and where the gaps are at this point.</li> <li>➤ In five minutes or fewer, present one particularly strong article or one particularly weak one.</li> </ul>
January 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approaching research design</li> <li>• Ideas, concepts, and theories</li> <li>• Concept mapping</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maxwell, Preface – ch. 3</li> </ul>
January 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research questions re-visited</li> <li>• Variables</li> <li>• Different kinds of data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maxwell, ch. 4</li> <li>➤ Literature memo</li> </ul>
January 27	No EDRS 810	

February 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research questions, conceptual frameworks, and quantitative research design</li> <li>• Measures of central tendency</li> <li>• Measures of variance</li> </ul>	
February 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sampling</li> <li>• Surveys</li> <li>• Correlation</li> <li>• Significance testing</li> </ul>	
February 17	No EDRS 810	➤
February 24	•	
March 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative research design workshop</li> </ul>	
March 9		➤ Quantitative pilot study due