

**Fall 2009**  
**University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Education**  
**Educational Leadership Program**  
***Course Syllabus***

---

**EDUC 636.961**

**School Based Inquiry and Reform**

3 credit hours

**Instructor:** Parry Graham, Ed.D.  
**Phone:** Graham 919-323-6794  
**Email:** [parrygraham@hotmail.com](mailto:parrygraham@hotmail.com)  
**Office Hours:** By appointment.  
**Location:** Carolina Center for Educational Excellence  
**Schedule:** Wednesdays 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. & Saturdays 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.  
 October 21<sup>st</sup> – December 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Course Description**

*EDUC 636 focuses on the reform context within which school leaders must work, and the internal reform initiatives that school leaders can leverage for school improvement. It includes an introduction to change processes, visioning and vision statements, models of school reform, data-based decision making, communications strategies for school leaders, and the importance of culture in learning communities.*

**Course Perspective**

School reform will be framed primarily through the lens of the continuous school improvement process. Using analysis, discussion, and reflection, students will examine real issues confronting school leaders at all levels of school and systemic reform. Special attention will be given to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills for Students, the school improvement planning process, and results from the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Students will reflect and exercise their ability to discern quality research from shallow research in the school reform process. Theory and concepts learned and developed in additional courses will be applied. Students' assumptions, beliefs, values, and style will be reflected upon and challenged. Discussion and problem solving among participants concerning differing views of educational issues will be a key component.

*This course is designed for 24 hours in-class participation and 21 hours of on-line activities*

**UNC-CH School of Education Conceptual Framework**

**Preparing Leaders in Education**

The School of Education is committed to the preparation of candidates who can assume leadership roles in the field of education. Such preparation is accomplished through the coherent integration of the abilities and predispositions of candidates, the knowledge and abilities of

faculty, and the contextual elements of academic and field settings. Candidates accept their professional responsibilities and focus their expertise and energy on supporting Birth-12 student development and learning. They must work to maintain a meaningful involvement in activities within schools and in partnership with parents and the community.

The growth and development of candidates is promoted through curriculum, instruction, research, field experiences, clinical practice, assessments, evaluations, and interactions with faculty and peers. All of these elements work together to build a solid foundation for exemplary practice in education, creating educational practitioners who are prepared to better serve children, families and schools, as well as business and agencies of government within North Carolina, across the nation and throughout the world.

### **For Equity and Excellence**

Preparation of educational leaders for today's society is based in values of equity and excellence that assure our candidates' and their students' future success. Attending to the challenge of promoting both equity and excellence is imperative. To address only one of these goals would, on the one hand, sacrifice those put at risk by social and cultural hierarchies in society or would, on the other hand, fail to press for the highest possible levels of accomplishment. Equity and excellence must be pursued concurrently to assure that all students are well served and that all are encouraged to perform at their highest level.

Within the School of Education, equity is seen as the state, quality, or ideal of social justice and fairness. It begins with the recognition that there is individual and cultural achievement among all social groups and that this achievement benefits all students and educators. Equity acknowledges that ignorance of the richness of diversity limits human potential. A perspective of equity also acknowledges the unequal treatment of those who have been historically discriminated against based on their ability, parents' income, race, gender, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, sexuality, or home language, and supports the closure of gaps in academic achievement. Decisions grounded in equity must establish that a wide range of learners have access to high quality education in order to release the excellence of culture and character which can be utilized by all citizens of a democratic society.

Within the School of Education, excellence is seen as striving for optimal development, high levels of achievement and performance for all and in all that is done. In preparatory programs across grade levels, curriculum and instruction furthers excellence when it moves a learner as effectively as possible toward expertise as a thinker, problem solver and creator of knowledge. Excellence entails a commitment to fully developing candidates, not only academically but also in moral and political senses.

### **In a Democratic Society**

The preparation of exemplary practitioners in education to meet the challenges of equity and excellence is best accomplished through preparation for a democratic society. Democracy around the globe is an ideal, one with the potential to meet the needs, recognize the interests and establish the rights of all citizens. Education is a necessary foundation for this ideal, and both must be subscribed to and participated in by all.

## **School of Education Conceptual Framework Principles**

The School of Education is committed to diverse, equitable, democratic learning communities. As a result candidates are expected to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and dispositions that prepare them to support the development and education of all students.

The School of Education uses the following unit principles, applicable at all program levels, to identify the knowledge and skills that are central to preparation of candidates. It is the School of Education's goal that candidates will become leaders supporting and promoting the development, teaching and learning of all students in multiple contexts.

1. Candidates possess the necessary content knowledge to support and enhance student development and learning.
2. Candidates possess the necessary professional knowledge to support and enhance student development and learning, including meeting student needs across physical, social, psychological, and intellectual contexts. Candidates incorporate a variety of strategies, such as technology, to enhance student learning.
3. Candidates possess the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct and interpret appropriate assessments.
4. Candidates view and conduct themselves as professionals, providing leadership in their chosen field, including effective communication and collaboration with students and stakeholders.

## **SOE Conceptual Framework Dispositions**

Certain dispositions are essential to prepare leaders who support equity and excellence in education within a democratic society. Dispositions are beliefs that foster commitments, leading to actions within educational environments with students, colleagues, families, and communities. Candidates strengthen these dispositions as they think deeply, reflect critically and act responsibly in their professional practice. These dispositions are interconnected with knowledge and skills; specific dispositions connect to and exemplify unit principles, facilitating their enactment in particular programs.

1. Candidates will exhibit behavior that demonstrates a belief that all individuals can develop, learn, and make positive contributions to society.
2. Candidates will exhibit behavior that demonstrates a belief that continuous inquiry and reflection can improve professional practice.

## **Course Objectives:**

This course will focus on reform, equity, change, data analysis, and school culture. At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to explain, apply, and integrate various conceptions of leadership to their forthcoming roles as school leaders.

Students will be able to:

- Understand the school improvement planning process.
- Understand how organizational climate and working conditions impact school success.
- Understand the role that organizational vision, mission, and values play in school reform/improvement.
- Understand the importance of school leaders discerning quality scientifically based research from shallow research in the school reform planning process.
- Understand how to analyze and interpret school data as part of school reform/improvement planning.
- Understand how collaborative structures support school reform/improvement.
- Understand how specific internal and external reform/improvement efforts impact schools.
- Understand the perspective of school leaders when considering internal and external reform/improvement efforts.
- Have the opportunity to ask practicing educational leaders (instructors) a variety of questions regarding school administration and leadership ranging from practical minutia to the highly abstract. All questions will be respected and answers attempted.

### **About the North Carolina Standards for School Executives and this Course**

The North Carolina Standards for School Executives represent the state framework for developing and assessing the skills of principals and assistant principals. The following North Carolina Standards for School Leaders receive a primary emphasis in this course:

#### *Standard 1: Strategic Leadership*

- Systematically considers new ways of accomplishing tasks and is comfortable with major changes in how processes are implemented;
- Utilizes data from the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey in developing the framework for continual improvement in the School Improvement Plan;
- Is a driving force behind major initiatives that help students acquire 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills;
- Creates with all stakeholders a vision for the school that captures peoples' attention and imagination;
- Creates processes that provide for the periodic review and revision of the school's vision, mission, and strategic goals by all school stakeholders;
- Creates processes to ensure the school's identity (vision, mission, values, beliefs and goals)
- actually drive decisions and inform the culture of the school;
- Facilitates the collaborative development of annual school improvement plans to realize strategic goals and objectives;
- Facilitates the successful execution of the school improvement plan aligned to the mission and
- goals set by the State Board of Education;
- Facilitates the setting of high, concrete goals and the expectations that all students meet them;

- Communicates strong professional beliefs about schools, teaching, and learning that reflect latest research and best practice in preparing students
- for success in college or in work;
- Creates processes to distribute leadership throughout the school.

*Standard 2: Instructional Leadership*

- Creates processes for collecting and using student test data and other formative data from other sources for the improvement of instruction.

*Standard 3: Cultural Leadership*

- Promotes a sense of well-being among staff, students and parents.

*Standard 4: Human Resource Leadership*

- Provides structures for the development of effective professional learning communities aligned with the school improvement plan, focused on results, and characterized by collective responsibility for instructional planning and for 21st Century student learning;
- Communicates a positive attitude about the ability of staff to accomplish substantial outcomes to improve their efficacy;
- Creates processes for teachers to assume leadership and decision making roles within the school that foster their career development;
- Creates and monitors processes for hiring, inducting and mentoring new teachers and other staff to the school;
- Uses the results of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey to create and maintain a positive work environment for teachers and other staff;
- Evaluates teachers and other staff in a fair and equitable manner and utilizes the results of evaluations to improve performance;
- Continuously searches for the best placement and utilization of staff to fully benefit from their strengths.

*Standard 5: Managerial Leadership*

- Creates processes to recruit and retain a high quality workforce in the school that meets the diverse needs of students.

*Standard 7: Micropolitical Leadership*

- Uses the School Improvement Team to make decisions and provides opportunities for staff to be involved in developing school policies;
- Designs transparent systems to equitably manage human and financial resources.

**Course Texts & Resources:**

- *If possible, we encourage students to bring laptops to class and download required readings.*
- North Carolina State Board of Education Documents: <http://www.ncptsc.org/>
  - NC Professional Teaching Standards
  - NC Standards for School Executives

- NC Standards for Superintendents
- NC State Board of Education's Missions and Goals
- Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators
- Code of Professional Practice and Conduct for North Carolina Educators
- Teacher Working Conditions Survey
- NC Teacher Evaluation System
- NC School Executives: Principal Evaluation Process
- Overview of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills in NC (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/profdev/>)
- Future Ready Students in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/profdev/>)
- Framework for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning (<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/profdev/>)
- Framework for Change: The Next Generation of Assessments and Accountability ([http://www.ncpublicschools.org/sbe\\_meetings/revisions/2008/0806revisions.html](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/sbe_meetings/revisions/2008/0806revisions.html))
- Articles Blackboard UNC Link: <http://blackboard.unc.edu/>

### **Participation in class:**

Active and thoughtful student participation is crucial to student learning and success in this class. Stimulating discussions and problem solving among **all** participants will be expected and encouraged.

### **Guiding Questions and Framework of Analysis for Class Readings & Discussions:**

1. What is the position made by the author?
2. What are the main points of the position?
3. How is the author's position substantiated?
4. What social justice issues are described, if any?
5. Whose interests are being denied or served by these practices?
6. What social conditions sustain and preserve these practices?
7. What power relationships are expressed in these practices?
8. What structural, organizational and/or cultural factors are acting to preserve the status quo as opposed to any reforms the author may be suggesting?
9. What questions have been raised that suggest the need for further study?
10. What did you learn in previous courses or experiences that would be helpful in examining the issue?
11. How are assumptions regarding human capacity and gender differences influencing the organization of schooling?
12. As we examine reform initiatives, how have evaluative practices unfairly stigmatized minority students and students with IEPs?
13. How do the reform initiatives under consideration eliminate or reinforce the gap between social *haves* and *have-nots*?
14. How have traditional models of school leadership prevented school leaders from proactive intervention for social justice and equity?

## **Student Responsibilities for the Course**

### **Attendance**

Students **must** attend each class session and participate effectively in class and on-line discussions and activities. Unless special permission is obtained from the instructor, missing any class will require make-up work and could impact your grade. The most common form of class make-up will be to read one of the books listed in the course reading list and approved by the instructor. Directions for the make-up assignment will be provided. Missing two full sessions of class will result in grade reduction. Beyond this limit absence may result in credit forfeiture.

### **Written Work Submitted**

All assignments submitted for this course must be the student's original work. Passing off work as original when it is not one's own may result in grade reduction or other disciplinary actions. Students should retain multiple copies of all work submitted. All work must be typed or word-processed, following the format of the APA (American Psychological Association). Work must be turned in on the date due unless special permission has been obtained from the instructor. The instructors expect graduate students to be competent and effective writers and written assignments will be graded accordingly. *This means correct grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation.*

### **About Student Special Needs or Handicapping Conditions**

If you have a special need or handicapping condition (vision, hearing, etc.) or require other special consideration for learning in the class, please notify the instructors via email or in person. In some cases, university resources can be made available to assist you.

### **Course and Instructor Evaluation by Students**

Students will be provided with frequent opportunities to evaluate the course and the instructor, as well as relevant materials and activities used in the course delivery. Student feedback is encouraged at any time. Honest and helpful feedback is appreciated.

### Tentative Class Schedule

The following course schedule is tentatively set forth to provide students with a general idea of the topics, scope and sequencing of this course. Classes will include a variety of group discussions, case study analysis, guest speakers, and in-class projects. The instructors may see fit to alter either the scope of the curriculum content or the pacing of the course based on student response. That alteration may include substituting assignments or making other adjustments (modifications, deletions, and additions) which may be necessary to more fully achieve the stipulated course objectives.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Session #</b>	<b>Topics</b>
10/21	1	<b>Class introductions</b> <b>Review of the syllabus and expectations</b> <b>The qualities of an effective school executive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NC Standards for School Executives</li> <li>• Portfolio review</li> </ul> <b>Examining the school reform context</b>
10/28	2	<b>Mission, vision, values, and change</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are culture and climate, and how do they impact improvement initiatives?</li> <li>• Do mission, vision, and values matter?</li> </ul>
10/31	3	<b>The changing legislative landscape</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do external governmental authorities and their initiatives impact the reform environment?</li> </ul> <b>School Choice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magnet schools, charter schools, and open transfer policies</li> <li>• How does “school choice” as a reform initiative impact public education?</li> </ul>
11/4	4	<b>“Cutting-edge” Reform</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In what ways has technology played a role as a reform initiative?</li> <li>• How might technology continue to impact public schools in the future?</li> </ul>
11/11	5	<b>School improvement planning and data-driven decision-making</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can school leaders use student and school data to drive internal reform efforts?</li> <li>• How does school data fit into the school improvement planning process?</li> </ul>
11/14	6	<b>Professional learning communities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are they?</li> <li>• How do school leaders make them happen?</li> <li>• Why is collaboration critical for internal reform?</li> </ul>
11/18	7	<b>Teacher working conditions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are teacher working conditions?</li> <li>• What impact can TWC data have on internal reform initiatives?</li> </ul>
12/2	8	<b>School Improvement Presentations</b>

### Class Assignments

- **Pre-Class Reflection comments:** Students are expected to post at least three substantive comments on the course blog each week regarding the upcoming class theme or topic,

integrating information from class readings, and personal experiences. Instructors will communicate during each class the blog question of the week. Multiple comment submissions are encouraged for a healthy dialogue!

- **Post-Class Reflection paper:** Students will submit a reflection paper on the previous week's class topic. Papers should be between 2 and 3 pages in length, 12-point font. Students are expected to reflect on their own beliefs and experiences, as well as synthesize and "make sense of" the assigned readings. Papers should be written from the perspective of an aspiring school executive. The reflection should also address how the week's theme impacts teachers, administrators, and efforts toward the school reform/improvement process.

Sample Guiding Questions:

- What principles or approaches did you learn that would assist you *as a school leader* as you work on future issues with similar characteristics?
  - What new information did you acquire that changed your knowledge and understanding of the issues read and discussed?
  - How might you apply this new information *as a school leader*?
  - What did you learn about yourself and your ability *as a leader* as you examined this issue?
- **Interview with a building principal:** A major component of this course is better understanding the change process from the point of view of a school leader. Each student is asked to select an experienced school leader and interview him/her regarding an improve initiative begun, implemented and/or institutionalized in his/her organization. In the paper, students should identify the initiative, how the school leader began, implemented, and/or institutionalized it, why it worked or did not work (from the leader's and student's perspective), and what lessons the student takes away concerning school reform.
    - 3-5 Double-spaced pages
    - 12 point font
    - Free of grammatical and spelling errors
  - **Internal or External Reform Initiative Paper:** Students should select a reform initiative with which they are generally unfamiliar and write a paper describing the initiative. Each student is asked to include a summary, address how the initiative impacts student achievement, classroom teachers/instruction, and school leaders. APA format expected.
    - 5 - 8 Double-spaced pages
    - 12 point font
    - Free of grammatical and spelling errors
    - Students are expected to reference at least 1 of each type of publication
      - Peer-reviewed research journal
      - Professional journal
      - 1 book on the topic

- **School improvement plan & Presentation:** The school improvement plan is not only a state mandate for all public schools; the school improvement planning process, if used effectively, is a critical aspect in all school reform efforts. Student groups will be given a variety of school information to develop a school improvement plan and prepare a presentation of the plan to the class.
- **Feed Forward ( optional):** At the end of each class meeting, students are encouraged to write positive or suggestive feedback on notecards to the instructor at the end of each class. All suggestive feedback will be considered and may impact future classes.

Assignment:	Weight of Final Grade:
Post-Class Reflection papers	20%
Pre-Class Reflection blog comments, class discussion participation, and additional online discussions/activities	20%
School Administrator Interview	20%
Reform Initiative Paper	20%
School Improvement Plan and Presentation (Group Assignment)	20%
<i>Any missed class session</i> <i>Or 1.0 cumulative missed</i> <i>Class sessions</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Individual paper-report on an approved book</i></li> </ul>	

### **Grades:**

The following general guidelines will be applied by the instructor to all papers submitted for this course:

**H=** a “perfect” paper in all respects. The paper has a solid narrative (beginning-middle-end), grounded in the required content, adds some original and creative elements, is well organized and developed, and is above the norm for student responses. The topic is clearly defined with rich details. No grammatical, structural, punctuation or spelling errors blemish the work. Citations are properly acknowledged.

**P=** an acceptable piece of work which is coherent, accurate, and responsive. It is adequately organized and developed, and the topic is clearly defined. May contain some *minor* grammatical or spelling errors, but nothing major. Citations are acknowledged appropriately.

**L =** a paper or piece of work marred by content deficiencies and repetitive or major spelling, grammatical, or structural problems. The paper lacks detail and is inadequately explained and developed. Citations difficult to recognize.

**F=** an unacceptable work product from the student. Does not reflect graduate work standards, vague, lacks direction, lacks cohesion, major spelling and grammatical errors, no or inadequately demonstrated citations.