

University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign - College of Education
Department of Educational Organization and Leadership

EOL 543: School Improvement
Course Syllabus, Fall 2008

Wednesdays, August 27- November 19
West Side Technical Institute of Richard J Daley College
5:30-9:30pm

Instructor: Linda S. Sloat , Ed.D.
Office: 337 Education Building
Office Hours: Mondays 1-3
and by appointment

email: lsloat@illinois.edu
Office Phone: 217-244-6781
Home phone: 217-328-1601
Cell phone: 217-649-9002

The question is not, Is it possible to educate all children well? But rather, Do we want to do it badly enough? Deborah Meier

“The problem is not tests *per se* but the failure . . . to be results focused and data driven. Coaches regularly adjust performances in light of ongoing results, even dramatically altering their lesson plans in light of unexpectedly poor results.” Grant Wiggins

Course Description:

This course is designed to provide an in-depth examination of reform proposals for changing the organization of schools, the instructional program, and the roles of students, teachers, and school administrators in order to improve learning. It involves engaged study including reading, discussion, and sharing student experiences and insights about school improvement, and investigates the pivotal role of the principal in building a community of learners.

Course Outcomes:

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

- understand the process of organizational change
- identify and understand the use of data to inform instructional decision making
- discuss the importance of effective data-informed decision making to the teaching and learning process, within the paradigm of continuous improvement
- develop and present an effective data collection and display related to their school

- develop strategies to create a school culture that recognizes and is inclusive of the multiple identities that shape individuals, including culture, race, ethnicity, sexual diversity, ability, gender, social class, religion and their intersections
- utilize school level data to inform decisions regarding school improvement and organizational change that ensures the success of all students and encourages collaboration among diverse stakeholders.

Required Textbooks:

- Boudett, K. P., City, E. A., & Murnane, R. J., (2006). *Data wise: A step-by-step guide to using assessment results to improve teaching and learning*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.
- Conzemius, A., & O'Neill, J., (2002). *The handbook for SMART school teams*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.
- Marzano, R., (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Mooney, N. J., & Mausbach, A. T., (2008). *Align the design: A blueprint for school improvement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Schmoker, M., (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Course Organization

This class will be conducted as a graduate seminar blending individual, small group and large group activities using multiple avenues of information gathering and communication. Students will relate new understandings about school improvement to their current learning community as reflective practitioners, identifying both the supports and the challenges of leadership to improvement of teaching and learning.

The development of the course is based on the notion that learning is something people do and knowledge is gained by doing; not something passively received. As such, students are expected to be able and willing to devote considerable attention to assignments and activities and share information and ideas. Students will gain experience in discussing their vision for schools, becoming more conscious of their own values, assumptions, and purposes in the process. This will include learning to think critically and systematically when analyzing key school improvement issues related issues.

General Expectations

In order to ensure that this course will be enjoyable and productive, students re expected to:

1. Study assigned readings and be prepared to actively contribute to conversations

- and activities related to them.
2. Complete assignments and hand them in on time.
 3. Attend and participate actively in all classes.
 4. Notify the professor if you are unable to attend class prior to the class meeting.

Expectations for all written work:

Graduate-level writing is expected to:

- Be free from grammatical and spelling errors.
- Be thoughtful and analytical.
- Be well structured and bias-free.
- Clearly draw from and refer to the reading assignments.
- Be in APA form with correct citations.
- Be student's original work.

Course Requirements:

Each student's performance in this course will be evaluated by:

1. Class Participation: 20% (30 points)

Class participation includes preparation for class, attendance, actively listening, and thoughtfully contributing to class dialogue and activities. We will be working closely with one another, sharing ideas and expertise. Participation in a class of this nature means allowing oneself to become fully engaged in learning process. Each student should be prepared to make active, informed contributions to class discussion focusing on any assigned readings or exercises. Three general points are worth noting:

- a. It is the quality, not the quantity, of one's contributions to class discussion that matters. Active listening is a must.
- b. Diverse views are desired; they add depth to our understanding. Students in the class possess a rich variety of experiences and we have much to learn from each other. Try to relate the readings or discussion to your own experience whenever possible. No one has your background and everyone can learn from hearing your reflections.
- c. Respect for one another's opinions and perspectives is a nonnegotiable.

The following are examples of constructive class participation:

- contributing interesting, insightful comments;
- presenting good examples of the comments at hand;
- building on the comments of others instead of repeating ideas previously shared;

- raising thoughtful questions;
- listening and responding appropriately to others;
- being sensitive to your level of participation, making attempts to increase or decrease if necessary; and
- voicing your thoughts and opinions in a way that is respectful of other individuals.

—

*The following guidelines will be used for evaluating class participation:

Outstanding contributor: Contributions in class reflect exceptional preparation. Ideas offered are always substantive, provide one or more major insights as well as direction for the class. Challenges are well substantiated and persuasively presented. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished markedly.

Good contributor: Contributions in class reflect thorough preparation. Ideas offered are usually substantive, provide good insights and sometimes direction for the class. Challenges are well substantiated and often persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished.

Adequate contributor: Contributions in class reflect satisfactory preparation. Ideas offered are sometimes substantive, provide generally useful insights but seldom offer a new direction for the discussion. Challenges are sometimes presented, fairly well substantiated, and are sometimes persuasive. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would be diminished somewhat.

Non-participant: This person says little or nothing in class. Hence, there is not an adequate basis for evaluation. If this person were not a member of the class, the quality of discussion would not be changed.

Unsatisfactory contributor: Contributions in class reflect inadequate preparation. Ideas offered are seldom substantive, provide few if any insights and never a constructive direction for the class. Integrative comments and effective challenges are absent. If this person were not a member of the class, valuable air time would be saved.

2. Individual construct of a school improvement framework: 15% (22 points)

First draft due August 27; revision due November 19

Prior to any readings, write a 1 page statement of your current conceptions of what school leaders—both administrators and teachers—must do to improve teaching and learning in schools. This paper should accurately represent what you actually believe about this idea right now—not what you think is “right”. This will serve as a baseline data for your final reflection at the end of this course.

3. Data collection and display project: 20% (30 points)

Data collection due Oct. 15 and Data display due Nov. 5

This is a two part project. The first deals with collection data from your school site. The second deals with displaying this data in various ways. This project will be individualized depending upon your school and your position. We will discuss this more the first day of class.

4. Reflection on the *Change Game*: 15% (22 points)

Due Oct. 22

A 1-2 page reflection/reaction paper to the *Change Game*. This paper should be a synthesis of our class discussions on change, carrying out a SIP action plan, and what happened during the game. Was it realistic or not—why or why not?

5. Analysis of your current School Improvement Plan: 30% (46 points)

Due Nov. 12

Using what we have discussed in class (SMART Goals, SMART School framework, various rubrics, data collection systems, etc) write a research-based analysis of your own current School Improvement Plan and process. What needs to be added and/ or eliminated? What considerations, if any, need to be added to make the improvement plan more meaningful as it relates to instructional practices. Be sure to address how leadership (both teacher and administrator) is used to improve teaching and learning within the school context.

Attendance Policy

Regular attendance is essential because of the nature of collaborative inquiry among participants in this course. The professor will be available during office hours for telephone consultations, and will be readily available by email. It is realized that some absences are unavoidable; arrangements must be made in advance, however, with the instructor for an excused absence.

Grading System

Assignments turned in late may be lowered one letter grade up or 10 percentage points. There are a total of 150 points possible

Course grades are based on the following scores:

150-141	A	134-130	B+	119-115	C+	104-100	D+	< 90	F
141-135	A-	129-124	B	114-109	C	99- 94	D		
		123-120	B-	108-105	C-	93- 90	D-		

Students with Disabilities:

I wish to fully include students with disabilities in this course. Please let me know if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments to enable you to participate fully. I will try to maintain the confidentiality of the information you share. Please contact me as early in the course as possible; definitely by the second class meeting.

Academic Honesty and Integrity Statement:

Students are expected to maintain academic honesty and integrity as students at the University of Illinois by doing their own work to the best of their ability. All written work by students should be the result of the individual student's research, thought, preparation, and writing efforts. Plagiarism and work that is prepared by others outside of the enrolled class and submitted as original work by the student is reason for punitive actions which may include dismissal and other serious actions by the university. See http://www.uiuc.edu/admin_manual/code/code_contents.html for the University's Code of Policies and Regulations that apply to all students.

Confidentiality:

In this course, we must respect several levels of confidentiality regarding information and experiences to which we will be privy. This includes information and anecdotes that may be shared in papers as well as class discussions and presentations. Appropriate treatment of the confidentiality of material and issues raised in class ultimately rests with our good judgment. We must be especially sensitive to the personal nature of the information and use discretion when talking and writing about the work.

Course Association to UIUC Conceptual Framework For Professional Education Programs

The objectives of this course are directly associated with University and College of Education Professional Education Program goals in the following areas:

- *Establishing community in teaching and learning environments
- *Guiding the development of inquiring and reflective minds
- *Emphasizing a reflective approach to understanding administrative leadership roles and practices, focusing particularly on critical thinking and analysis of research and leadership theory applications to public school administration
- *Fostering a commitment to service
- *Exploring the essential role and commitment of educators to serving the professional and school communities
- *Pursuing the understanding and application of technology

Course Association with Content Area Standards in Educational Administration

This course directly utilizes the following professional content area standards for the preparation of principals:

Standard 1: Facilitating a vision of educational excellence

This course stresses the understanding of the change process within educational contexts. Such an understanding is crucial in order to facilitate a vision for the school district and individual schools that is appropriate, relevant, and moves the system along toward accomplishing measurable goals.

Standard 2: School culture, learning environment, and instructional program

This course's examination of a systems thinking approach to school systems will enable students to understand that the development of school culture, the learning environment, and the instructional program is highly interdependent upon multiple influences.

Standard 3: Management

This course will examine cross-functional responsibilities for managing change in schools at the classroom, building, and district levels.

Standard 4: Collaboration with families and communities

The understanding of the influence of parents and non-parents in the improvement school systems is critical for the leader who seeks family-community-school collaboration. This course will enable students to consider an increasingly inclusive model for school improvement planning.

Standard 5: Acting with integrity, fairness, and in compliance with legal and ethical standards

This course will focus on integrity and ethical decision making by effective instructional leaders required to improving teaching and learning. Students will understand the necessity of leading in congruence with the norms of the community in which their schools are located and will address processes which examine the reculturing of schools and school systems.

Standard 6: The political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context

This course addresses the contexts which exert influence on school improvement. It will examine the influences of such contexts in light of the current accountability mandates.

Course Schedule for EOL 543: School Improvement

Date		Assignment for Class	Written Work I
Aug. 27	<p>How bad or good is it really?</p> <p>Do I have to change?</p> <p>Why are others so resistant to change?</p>	<p>Read: Results: 1-48 Teams: xvii-21 Works: 1-11</p> <p>Bring: 2 copies of 08-09 SIP 2 copies of list of curricular and behavioral initiatives for last four years 2 copies of school improvement goals for last 4 years 2 copies of your school's mission and/or vision statement</p>	<p>Write: One page sta leaders must do t and learning in s</p>
Sept. 3	<p>It begins with the curriculum.</p> <p>Working in teams is hard.</p>	<p>Read: Align: ix-26 Results: 49-102 Works: 15-34; 78-88; 106-123 Teams: 23-81</p>	
Sept. 10	<p>Do you have a mission? A vision?</p> <p>It all has to work together.</p>	<p>Read: Teams: 179-253 Align: 26-41</p>	
Sept. 17	<p>Are you assessment literate?</p>	<p>Read: Align: 42-78 Data 11-58</p> <p>Bring: 2 copies of a list of all the common assessments that are given in your school</p>	<p>Bring: 2 copies of a l assessments that school</p>
Sept. 24	<p>Data, data, data</p>	<p>Read: Teams: 85-113 Data: 59-80 Works: 157-171</p>	
Oct. 1	<p>What else can I collect and why?</p>	<p>Read: Teams: 133-177</p>	
Oct. 8	<p>What does it all mean?</p>	<p>Read: Data: 81-96; 119-136 Align: 79-92</p>	
Oct. 15	<p>CHANGE GAME</p>	<p>No reading assignment</p>	<p>Write: Data collectio</p>
Oct. 22	<p>What gets monitored gets done.</p>	<p>Read: Data 137-178</p>	<p>Write: 1-2 page react Game</p>
Nov. 5	<p>Adults have to learn too.</p>	<p>Read:</p>	<p>Write:</p>

		Align: 93-122 Teams: 255-260 Works: 60-70 Results: 105-123	Data collection and analysis due
Nov. 12	You can have great teachers without a great principal but you can't have a great school without a great principal. Leadership does matter.	Read: Align: 123-165 Results: 124-150 Works: 172-178	Write: Four to six pages on school's SIP plan recommendation
Nov. 19	May be modified: What makes a school work? (school factors, teacher factors, student factors)	May be modified: Read: Works: 15-21; 47-52; 53-59; 71-77; 88-105; 123-126	Write: Revised one page on what school leaders can do to improve teaching in schools.