

**THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY and REGIONAL TRAINING CENTER
MASTERS OF EDUCATION IN
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: INSTRUCTION**

**CLASSROOM INQUIRY CORE:
THREE-COURSE OVERVIEW**

The TCNJ – RTC Masters of Education in Educational Leadership: Instruction program is structured around a three-course sequence of linked classes that introduce practicing teachers to the growing field of “Practitioner Inquiry”, a classroom-based exploration of K-12 teachers’ challenges, successes and professional questions about their own teaching. According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993), teacher research is “*systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own classroom and school practices.*” -1

The three courses (EDUC 510, EDUC 601, and EDUC 602) are to be taken sequentially, ideally spaced at beginning, middle and near-end points of the larger instructional program, at intervals determined by the student. The three research courses draw upon other RTC courses, as well as students’ experience, for project ideas and inspiration. Collectively, the research courses introduce students to an exploration of the theory, history, and practice of teacher inquiry before guiding students through the development of their own classroom-based inquiry project.

Over the course of the three Classroom Inquiry core classes, students will complete a personal teacher research project of their own design, based on their own emerging and deeply held questions about teaching. The final project has two main components: 1) A paper that documents the students’ inquiry project and process, and 2) a final presentation of major highlights from the inquiry process. The presentation may involve a power point, a poster or other format often seen at professional conferences. The presentation is part of a culminating event to which select members of the TCNJ and RTC communities (such as course professors and other students) may be invited. The following is a brief overview of the work and concept of the three courses.

COURSE I EXPLORATION OF CLASSROOM INQUIRY (EDUC 510)

It is suggested that this initial research course be taken early in the students’ program (no later than the third course). This allows students to develop their inquiry questions in connection with other RTC courses, as well as classroom contexts. Through readings, in-class discussions and class assignments, this course addresses several basic questions about teacher research from both practical and theoretical perspectives. The exploration is framed by 4 central questions:

- *What is “teacher inquiry” and what does teacher-generated inquiry look like?*
- *What is the history and philosophy of practitioner inquiry as a field?*
- *What are the critical features of professional inquiry conducted by teachers?*
- *How might I begin to prepare to do my own teacher inquiry project?*

Class work will incorporate extensive reading, and reflective writing as well as student discussion, lecture and in-class presentation as a way of enriching the students’ understanding of the role and use of professional inquiry in their own teaching. Learning goals for the course include:

- Exploration and evaluation of major examples of classroom and teacher research theory and practice
- Examination of assumptions and beliefs about teaching and their relationship to student learning, teacher knowledge, education reform and school culture.

Note: The inquiry courses reflect current accountability standards for K-12 teachers for the State of New Jersey

COURSE II MODES OF INQUIRY (EDUC 601)

This second course is designed to be taken approximately mid-way through the program of studies. The course focuses on the development and implementation of inquiry questions, guiding students through the initial phases of inquiry, including problem statement, research design, data collection activities and literature review. The guiding question of the course is

- *How do I do professional inquiry and how do I develop a question into an inquiry project*

As such, this course focuses on the skills, methods, techniques and understandings required for students to develop their own personal inquiry project. A major requirement of the course is the development of a realistic, workable teacher action plan that students will implement as their inquiry project. The course work for 601 carries over into the subsequent third course, EDUC 602. A variety of inquiry methods and designs will be explored within a collaborative learning model. Students should expect to work closely and collaboratively with other students in developing inquiry questions and action plans. The course is generally taught over two, non-consecutive weekends allowing students time to adequately prepare their research plans, although summer schedules may vary. Assignments are designed to assist the students in completion of inquiry projects. Learning goals include:

- Understanding of relationship between inquiry questions, research methods and teaching
- Development of an inquiry question and action plan for classroom-based study that students will conduct in their own school settings or context
- Development of personal and critical research skills as teacher researcher and leader

NOTE: Students intending to graduate in December (of any year) should strongly consider taking EDUC 601 and EDUC 602 in the Spring, prior to December graduation. Taking EDUC 601 in Summer and EDUC 602 in Fall (just before graduation) may not leave enough time for completion of work....causing delay in graduation.

COURSE III INQUIRY IN PRACTICE (EDUC 602)

This third course is designed to immediately follow EDUC 601. Students should plan their program schedule with this in mind. These courses must be taken in succession. This course involves the completion of the inquiry project previously developed in EDUC 601. The course also includes a forum (EDUC 700) for student presentation of results and knowledge emerging from the teacher research project. A central question for this course is

- *How do I implement and share the findings and knowledge related to my inquiry project?*

Answers to such questions will depend on each student's teaching contexts.

EDUC 602 combines class sessions with the whole class and the instructor with collaborative group work done outside of class with other students. These two meeting formats are carefully designed to address common questions about data collection, data analysis and research writing and more. EDUC 602 schedules are arranged between instructor and students. Although students progress at their own pace, a cohort model is encouraged whenever possible and practical. EDUC 602 class meetings are typically spread out over 5 months, as the students progress through each phase of the inquiry process.

Culminating assignments include a "final paper" that documents each student's inquiry project and process combined with a presentation of their project highlights. The presentation should focus on implications for practice as well as new insights acquired by the student.

Learning goals of the course include:

- Preparation of a comprehensive, professional quality piece of classroom-based inquiry
- Development of a presentation of the inquiry project
- Examination of the practical implications of research on multiple levels, including classroom-wide, school-wide and systemic.

Students should use this information to carefully plan their program of study, allowing ample time for completion of the research courses, as well as other required and optional courses. Additional details are available through program advisement sessions.