

Foundations of Education

Syllabus

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the cultural, sociological, political, and historical underpinnings of the American education system. Participants will review local, state, and national policy, legislation, and regulations pertaining to PreK-12 education. Participants will reflect upon how these concepts drive instructional practices in today's challenging classroom environment. Using the cases as a launching point, teachers will be given opportunities to engage in online discussions, journal reflections, and workbook assignments focusing on beliefs, best practices, challenges, current research, and classroom applications.

Competencies

Upon completion of this course, participants will be able to:

- Explain the impact of population shifts and the importance of cultural proficiency in relationship to public education systems
- Discuss the connection between public schools and sociological issues and trends
- Describe the important political issues that influence public education at the Federal, State and Local levels
- Apply knowledge about the evolving model of public education by considering historical and current perspectives on school reform and
- Address contemporary issues in education including developing methods for appropriately integrating technology within the parameters of differentiated instruction.

Materials

All materials are accessed via the [CaseNEX website](#) using the PIN provided and the user name/password you create.

All readings listed can be found by going to *Class Materials*→*Virtual Library*→*Readings (Search)*.

If you do not have the most recent versions of the following software, please download each from the given sites.

- [Windows Media Player](#)
- [RealPlayer](#)
- [Adobe Reader](#)
- [QuickTime](#)

Cases Used

- Change Can Be A Challenge
- Dealing With Data
- Let Us Pray
- Measure Up
- What's Happening

[Course requirements and grades](#)

Course Schedule

Find session dates by selecting *Syllabus* on the top menu bar. For typical courses, final Discussions, Journals, and Workbooks are due by Saturday at midnight unless otherwise noted. Please see the News Flash for any alterations of the course schedule posted by your instructor.

Introductory Session

Exploring the CaseNEX Site

Complete these tasks prior to the beginning of Session 1.

Readings

Read the course requirements, paying special attention to the Case-Analysis and Workbook Assignment Rubrics. They will be used by your instructor throughout the course to evaluate assignments where appropriate.

Discussion

Post one entry introducing yourself to your classmates. You may choose to describe your professional background and experience, relevant personal information, or why you are taking this course. (100 words or fewer)

Journal

What do you find inspiring and challenging about your work in education? (100 words or fewer)

Note

Use CaseMail to send a note to your instructor stating that you will be taking this course. To do so, click on CaseMail on the top menu bar and then 'Click here to create a new message.' Use the marked link to look up an address. Continue linking down until you see the class list. Select the instructor's name and then compose your message and hit 'Post Message.'

Session 1

Understanding Culture, Equity, and Multicultural Influences

Case

What's Happening?

Readings

- US Census Bureau Projections of the Resident US Population by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity
- US Census Bureau Projections of State Populations, by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin
- US Census Bureau poverty data
- Cultural Proficiency (read introduction and the "Assessment Scales" and "Culturally Proficient Schools" links)
- [Seven Key Characteristics of a Multicultural Education Curriculum](#)

Discussion

In which ways do you identify with the teachers and **issues** depicted in the case? Pick the scene that seems most familiar to you from scenes 1, 3, 5, or 6. Based on the **knowledge** gained from this session's reading, determine where the teacher in the scene is on the Cultural Proficiency Assessment Scales. How might this teacher's education, family, and professional experiences have shaped his or her **perspective**? What **actions** might the teacher take to increase his or her cultural proficiency?

Journal

How do the demographics of your school compare to national and state US Census Bureau figures? Describe **actions** suggested by these population shifts and their possible **consequences** for your classroom and school community.

Note

Check your CaseMail (linked from top menu bar) and News Flash (on the right when you login) for notes from your instructor every time you log on to the site.

Workbook

None this session

Session 2

Recognizing Sociological Influences

Case

Let Us Pray

Readings

- Social and Economic Context
- [Ethical Leadership](#)
- [Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools](#)

Discussion

Apply **knowledge** gained from the "[Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools](#)" reading. Discuss the **perspectives** of the students' and Principal Estment. Propose the possible **consequences** of the character's **actions** in the case, including long-term, intended and unintended consequences.

Journal

Society in conjunction with its social trends and issues has a direct influence on the public education systems in the United States. Reflect on the social **issues** faced by students you currently teach or have worked with in the past. What **actions** has your school or district taken to address these issues? In what ways did the actions of school leaders reflect the principles discussed in the reading "Ethical Leadership"?

Workbook

Case Analysis

Using either the scene of your choice from What's Happening or the case Let Us Pray, complete a formal case analysis. Address each of the 5-Steps in turn, referring to the Course Tutorial and the Case-Analysis Rubric to guide your thinking.

Session 3

Understanding the Legal Foundation of Public Education

Case

Let Us Pray

Readings

- FindLaw Education Law Section
- The National School Boards Association School Law Issues Web Page
- The Supreme Court and Public Schools

Discussion

After reading Ryan's "The Supreme Court and Public Schools," summarize the difference between how the Court approaches applying the Equal Protection, Establishment, and Free Exercise Clauses in the public school setting and how it applies free speech, Fourth Amendment privacy, and due process rights in the public schools. Discuss your **perspective** on the extent to which you believe these differing approaches are warranted and whether you agree with the distinctions the Supreme Court has drawn.

Journal

Describe specific legal **issues** your school or district has confronted. What **actions** were taken to resolve them? What was the final outcome? Explain the subsequent **consequences** (both positive and negative). What has been the affect of these issues on the daily "business" of your school or district?

Workbook Assignment

What Educators Should Know

Choose from the following list of topics and post your choice in your **journal** by the end of **this session**. (Please note this assignment has two due dates. The actual assignment is due by the end of Session 7 as indicated below).

- Eligibility under IDEA
- Individual Education Plans under IDEA

- Discipline and IDEA
- Section 504 Eligibility Process
- Search and Seizure
- Title IX—Selected Controversies
- Termination of Teachers
- Sexual Harassment (Adult to Adult, Adult to Student, Student to Student)
- Student Expression
- Internet/Technology Legal Controversies
- Athletics and Extracurricular Activities—Selected Controversies
- Free Exercise and Establishment Clause Issues
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Employment Discrimination
- Teachers’ Rights of Expression, Association, and Privacy
- Student Records—FERPA
- Employment Licensure, Pre-employment Issues, Contracts, Assignments and Tenure
- Employment Grievance Procedures and Resulting Controversies
- School Vouchers
- Charter Schools

This assignment is designed to give each course participant the opportunity to gain some depth of understanding in one area of school law and then to serve as a resource for the entire class. Research your topic and prepare a short (no longer than the equivalent of 1250 words) briefing paper on what educators need to know about the area of law you choose. Pay close attention to the **issues** involved: recent trends, controversies, new developments, and circumstances in your state. On the due date, you will post the paper on the discussion board and in your Workbook.

Depending on the topic, you may choose to give a comprehensive overview of an area with general guidelines for practice, or you may examine selected issues after a brief overview. You may also break down a topic into a component part, if you find that it is too broad for purposes of the assignment. On the other hand, you may expand on topic by relating the content to a specific controversy of interest that is illustrative of a larger legal trend or principle. Where appropriate, you may focus on state laws or local school division policies.

Topic selection due by the end of this session. Briefing paper due by the end of Session 7.

Session 4

Recognizing the Federal Role in Education

Case

None this session

Readings

- Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium: Standards for School Leaders Standards
<http://www.ccsso.org/publications/details.cfm?PublicationID=365>
- The Education Agenda from the White House

Discussion

Based upon the reading and your experiences, what do you consider to be the most important research-based factors in helping students develop literacy? How do these factors change as students' progress through the grades? Provide a concrete example of **actions** you have taken that support your response. Incorporate the needs of students with diverse backgrounds into the discussion.

Journal

Choose one of the areas outlined in the White House agenda on Education. Identify how that affects your life as a teacher, parent, or administrator. Outline what you believe are the priorities for that area and the **consequences**, both large and small, of there not being federal and/or state attention to that area.

Workbook

None this session

Session 5

Understanding State Standards and Testing

Case

Dealing with Data

Readings

- *Standards: Here Today, Here Tomorrow*
- *Improving Teaching and Learning with Data-Based Decisions: Asking the Right Questions and Acting on the Answers*
- *Using Student Assessment Data: What Can We Learn From Schools?*
- *"Cooking With Data" to Target Education Gaps*

Discussion

Read and analyze the data found within the case: demographic information; gifted student profile; results from state assessments (disaggregated and compared to other schools in the district); socio-economic status and student achievement; and school staffing profile. Summarize the **knowledge** that you have gained from these data regarding the changes occurring in Sequoia's demographics, student test scores, and student achievement. Taking Emma's **perspective**, what additional knowledge and data would be beneficial prior to making any school improvement, budget, or personnel changes? Where might this information be found? Cite the readings to support your response.

Journal

Focusing on the grade you currently teach or a grade you have taught, discuss state standards and testing currently in place and the instructional **issues** these raise. In which ways do these standards present a strong model for what students should learn? Review the examples for using data to improve instruction presented in "Improving Teaching and Learning with Data-Based Decisions: Asking the Right Questions and Acting on the Answers." Which seems most appropriate to your school or situation?

Workbook

Data-Based Decision Making

Gather all relevant student data for the grade in which you teach. If you do not teach a specific grade, select a grade that is of interest to you. Data sources might include:

- State testing results;
- Student demographics, including gender, race, and ethnicity;
- Free and reduced lunch counts;
- Attendance;
- Students identified for additional services;
- Discipline referrals; and
- Staffing summaries.

Discuss the trends that emerge from the data regarding socio-economic issues and student achievement, as well as any other trends that are of interest to you. Based on these trends, what are the primary **issues** facing the teachers and students at this grade level? Outline at least two short-term and two long-term **actions** that you propose to address these challenges and anticipate their **consequences**.

Provide a summary of your findings and action plan that is at least 1000 words in length.

Session 6

Recognizing the Local Role in Education

Case

Change Can Be a Challenge

Readings

- The Roles and Responsibilities of School Boards and Superintendents
- Local School Boards Under Review

Discussion

In this session's case, when Prairiedale taxpayers only approved ten million dollars to relieve overcrowding at the old middle school, Superintendent Conklin identified three **actions** for the school district. What other options might have been considered?

Journal

Review the Key Characteristics section of the "Local School Boards Under Review" reading and use that **knowledge** to evaluate your local school board on each of the four characteristics mentioned in the article. What **issues** are raised by your evaluation? Describe any **actions** you would recommend based on your evaluation.

Workbook

None this session

Session 7

Appreciating Historical Influences

Case

Change Can Be a Challenge

Readings

- Trends and Issues: School Reform
- Brown vs. The Board of Education
- Report card on education in 20th century issued by Vanderbilt University
- [Does It Matter Where Our Children Learn?](#)

Optional Readings/ Background Information

- American Educational History: A Hypertext Timeline
- History of Education Web Project
- History and Philosophy of Education
- School: The Story of American Public Education
- New Directions in American Educational History: Problems and Prospects
- U.S. Supreme Court: BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION, 347 U.S. 483 (1954)

Discussion

Propose **actions** that Dr. Bruce Norbert, the principal of Prairiedale Middle School, should take based upon **knowledge** gained from the reading “Does It Matter Where Our Children Learn?” When responding to your colleague’s proposed actions, do so from the **perspective** of another character in the case. What might this character think and feel if these suggestions are implemented?

Journal

Historical research reveals that as our society develops an understanding of the most appropriate methods for learning, change will be an inevitable part of our educational institutions. According to the “Trends and Issues: School Reform” reading, “Schools will not meet increasingly higher expectations by doing more of what they have always done; new beliefs and practices are required” (Elmore and Fuhrman). Based upon this reading, what **knowledge** have you gained about the role of teachers in school reform? What are the

issues surrounding any educational reform **actions** that are currently being undertaken in your school? Describe the **perspectives** of teachers, students, families, and administration on these **issues**.

Workbook

The "What Educators Should Know" briefing paper is due by the end of this session. Post your assignment in your Workbook for instructor feedback and in the Discussion area for access by other course participants. (List your chosen topic in the "description" area for easy reference by your colleagues.)

Session 8

Recognizing Contemporary Influences: Technology Integration

Case

Measure Up

Readings

- How Does Technology Influence Student Learning?
- Focus on Effectiveness: Integrating Technologies

Discussion

How are the teachers at Cedar Street Elementary, Gloucester Elementary, and West Staples High School using technology? According to the readings, what **knowledge** are the students gaining from these instructional techniques? What are some of the **consequences** of these teachers using or not using technology? From the teachers' **perspectives**, why do you think they made these instructional choices? How would you respond to Florence Lowry's statements, that she has "too much to teach now to incorporate video games and the internet" and that "no one has proven that computers help kids learn"?

Journal

Consider the **perspectives** of teachers in your building who are and who are not yet using technology. What are the **issues** these teachers are facing? What **issues** are influencing their decision to use or not use technology? What are some of the **consequences** of their decisions?

Workbook Assignment

None this session