

Guidelines for the Action Research Option in the
Masters in Education Program
Walsh University

The intent of the Action Research option is to provide in-service educators with the opportunity to apply the information and skills acquired through their graduate studies in a project that will directly benefit students. This alternative will culminate in a five-part document, as described below.

- I. Statement of the Problem (Anticipated Length: 1 page)
Each student will identify a problem around which to design this project. The problem should address a current educational issue that he/she is concerned about. The problem could be of strictly local concern, or more broad-based. The issue must be reality-based, clearly defined, school or classroom centered (unless an alternative model is approved), and involve between five and fifty students. Each student will submit his/her proposed problem statement to at least two graduate education faculty for approval BEFORE beginning the study. Deadline for obtaining approval:_____

- II. Review of Literature (Anticipated Length: 5-8 pages)
Each student will complete a review of the professional literature related to his/her research subject. The review should include both print and electronic information sources. The composite review should reflect the content of 10-15 related publications, each dated within the past five years. While this portion of the document should be written in narrative form, a complete reference list, in APA form, should be included at the end of the document.

- III. Proposed Model/Intervention/Strategy (Anticipated Length: 2-3 pages)
Each student will thoroughly describe what he/she plans to do in an attempt to address the issue of concern described above. The actual "treatment" may involve implementing new methods or materials, comparing the attitudes or achievement of two groups of students experiencing differing instruction, providing supplemental instruction from other students or community volunteers, instituting a new student-centered activity, etc. This portion of the document will include: a description of the students involved, any relevant background information or data related to the problem you are addressing, a complete description of the model to be implemented, and a description of the anticipated results, both short term and over time, of implementing this design. At this point, the student must submit required documents to the Human Subjects Review Board at Walsh University to obtain research approval BEFORE proceeding with the study. This requirement should not be problematic, assuming the planned "treatment" is within the accepted range of usual school experiences.

- IV. Data Gathering & Reporting (Anticipated Length: 1-2 pages)
Each student is required to gather data related to his/her study. At a minimum, statistical information must be acquired before model implementation, and afterwards for pre- and post- comparative analysis. These data could come from a variety of sources, such as: teacher-made test results, questionnaires, surveys, observational checklists, etc. Be sure to select measurement instruments that are available during the course of the project. For instance, as useful and powerful as the results of the Ohio Proficiency Tests are, they are not administered frequently enough to yield pre- and post- data for a semester-long project. In this portion of the document, the collected data should be displayed and discussed clearly, to demonstrate what effects, if any, the project, seem to be associated with the project. The researcher should review his/her understandings from previous coursework so as to avoid false interpretations, over generalizations, and the difficulties that result from not controlling all variables that might have affected observed student performance.
- V. Analysis and Extension of Results (Anticipated Length: 1-2 pages)
In this concluding section, the student will review his/her project and the apparent results. It is appropriate here to describe, additional factors that may have affected measured outcomes, adaptations to be made in future versions of the model, and new understandings that result from this research project. It is also appropriate to discuss extensions of this model; that is, what might this mean to others at the same school/grade level? Are there broader implications that might benefit other educators locally, regionally, or nationally? What additional research is indicated? Why is this worth pursuing further?

Sample Topics Appropriate for Action Research:

1. Improving Student Performance on Proficiency-Type Story Problems in Math
2. The Effects of Implementing the New _____ Textbook
3. Student Attitudes toward Diversity
4. Observable Results of Implementing Learning Centers
5. The Impact of Journaling on Students' Writing Skills

Final Document Due: _____