

Intro to Action Research in Special Education

EDSE 285

Spring 2026 Section 01 Hybrid 3 Unit(s) 01/22/2026 to 05/11/2026 Modified 01/19/2026

Contact Information

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Office Hours: one hour before class and TBA via Zoom

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The preferred method for communication is Canvas messenger

Course Information

Hybrid - Lecture with Research

- Mondays 7:00 pm - 9:45 pm
- Sweeney Hall Room 230

This course will adopt a hybrid classroom delivery format, with instruction divided between in person class sessions and online participation. Students will need access to a computer or tablet device with reliable internet connectivity. If you do not have such a device, there are resources on campus that you can use. Be sure to plan to use these resources frequently to keep up with the pace of the course.

Computer labs for student use are available in the [Academic Success Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc>) located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated Students Lab on the 2nd floor of the Student Union. Computers are also available in the Martin Luther King Library.

Canvas Learning Management System

All course materials (announcements, syllabus, handouts, assignment instructions, lecture videos, etc.) will be available on Canvas. You are responsible for regularly checking both Canvas and your SJSU email (the one that ends with "@sjsu.edu") to learn of any updates. For Canvas support, please review the [Canvas Student Resources](http://www.sjsu.edu/at/ec/canvas/student_resources_new/index.html) (http://www.sjsu.edu/at/ec/canvas/student_resources_new/index.html).

Technology Requirements

All written work must be turned in using Microsoft Office Word (or Excel, for the Research Matrix). The Microsoft Office Suite is available **FOR FREE** from the university. If you do not have Microsoft Office on your computer, please refer to [Information Technology Services](http://its.sjsu.edu/services/software/microsoft-students/index.html) (<http://its.sjsu.edu/services/software/microsoft-students/index.html>) for information on how to download the software on your device.

Course Description and Requisites

Review of existing scholarship in special education and appropriate design of an action research project.

Prerequisite(s): Department consent.

Note(s): This course satisfies graduate-level GVAR in this master's program.

Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Students are expected to come to class prepared by having read the assigned readings and completed the assignments which are due.

As always, students are expected to be respectful of each other, including differences of opinion.

Program Information

LCOE Department of Special Education Mission

We prepare candidates to be transformative leaders in the field, and lifelong learners who respond to racism, ableism, bigotry, and prejudice in their schools and communities. To this end, we center anti-racist and anti-ableist policies and practices in our teaching, research, and service to disrupt systemic racism that has historically prevented full inclusion and equity for students with disabilities including our BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) students, staff, and faculty. We engage culturally sustaining pedagogies and the principles of UDL in our coursework and fieldwork, partnering with our local districts to push for the success of students with disabilities in inclusive settings.

LCOE Department of Special Education Program Learning Outcomes

- **PL0 1** Assess and identify the educational needs and strengths of students with disabilities from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- **PL0 2** Critically evaluate pedagogy, curricula and instructional materials grounded in quality indicators of evidence-based practices for students with disabilities.
- **PL0 3** Plan, design, implement, and monitor linguistically and culturally appropriate instruction that meets the unique needs of students with disabilities.

- **PLO 4** Apply knowledge of the purpose, characteristics, and appropriate use of different types of assessments used for special education eligibility, placement, and service selection.
- **PLO 5** Utilize research-based knowledge and theoretical, conceptual and evidence-based practices related to individuals with disabilities to improve services and instruction in the field.

[Link to Education Specialist TPEs \(pps 13 – 42\) \(https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/education-specialist-standards-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=729750b1_45\)](https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/educator-prep/standards/education-specialist-standards-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=729750b1_45)

Course Goals

This course is designed as a supervised study in the field of special education. At the core of the course is a commitment to professional excellence and fostering inclusive, culturally sustaining, democratic principles of education for students with disabilities.

Graduate students in this master's program, as professional educators, must be able to make informed and effective decisions, promote asset framed practices and respect and value difference across the intersections of disability, race, culture, language, gender, sexuality, and class. We expect that graduate students will be well prepared in understanding conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underly special education and disability as well as effective practices that meet the individual needs of all learners.

Graduate students will develop leadership skills and act as change agents in schools for students with disabilities, families and other educational stakeholders.

As the first of two courses in the Master's in Special Education program, this course will provide graduate students with an overview of (a) action research in special education, (b) current research and theory in the field of special education, and (c) the knowledge and skills to effectively set up an action research project with appropriate attention to the existing scholarship in the field of special education.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)

To support students' development of the skills required to demonstrate mastery in the PLOs above, this course will target the following CLOs. By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of how to search for and review literature related to questions of teaching practices for students with disabilities
2. Interpret, apply, and disseminate current and emerging research, theory, legislation, policy, and practice for students with disabilities
3. Discuss the organization and processes of instruction in programs serving individuals with disabilities
4. Review, critically analyze and synthesize research as a part of reflecting on one's practice and commitment to equity and social justice in the classroom.
5. Develop and apply academic writing style to compose an action research project.

6. Apply APA 7 Edition standards when writing literature reviews, professional critiques and Use APA 7 Edition formatting including double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt, one-inch margins.

Course Materials

American Psychological Association.

(2020). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). Washington, D.C.:

Author. ISBN: 978-1-4338-3217-8 (Spiral with tabs).

Order Info: www.apa.org/pubs/books @\$45 (if you have 6th Edition we recommend reviewing the handouts on 7th Edition here <https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/publication-manual-formatting-checklist.pdf>)

Sagor, R. D., & Williams, C. (2016). *The action research guidebook: A process for pursuing equity and excellence in education*. Corwin Press.

Course Requirements and Assignments

APA 7th Edition formatting must be used for all report components, including Times New Roman Font, 12-point, double spaced, one-inch margins.

1. **Introduction** (about 2-3 pages) - 15 points

Part 1: Positionality / Personal Experience. What educational experiences have you had as a student and/or teacher that inform your inquiry? What experiences have you had with people with disabilities that inform your teaching experiences?

Part 2: Problem of Practice Statement. What is the problem in your practice that you wish to investigate? What is the evidence of this problem? For example, what student learning outcomes point to this problem? Why is this problem important to other educators and/or society?

Part 3: Initial Question. End your introduction with a clear description of your initial research question. For example, what happens/can I notice about X (S outcome) when Y (T intervention). Your question should be clearly connected to the background information you've shared and may be related to state, national, and global issues. Keep in mind that action inquiry is not suited to investigate questions of cause and effect. You have a choice between conducting a descriptive action study in which the action inquiry seeks to better understand and perhaps act upon a problem/phenomenon (where words like effect, cause, intervention, hypothesis would not be appropriate) OR a hypothesis testing action project where you would be looking at the effect of an intervention (words like effect, intervention, hypothesis would be appropriate here).

2. **Conceptual Framework** (about 1-2 pages) - 15 points

Part 1: Theory of Action. Briefly state what you plan to do and what your expected outcomes are. E.g., "I will try X in (defined educational context) to address problem Y"

or “If I do X (intervention) in my educational context, participants will Y (outcome) as evidenced by Z (outcome data).”

Part 2: Theoretical Grounding. Describe the theoretical and research-based literature That supports your theory of action. E.g.: “I believe action X will address problem Y because ____ (evidence from the literature).”

3. Literature Review (about 5-10 pages) - 55 points

The first paragraph restates the problem of practice and introduces three foundational topics. Each of these topics will be developed as follows:

What have others learned about the topic? This should flow directly from the question and theoretical framework presented in the previous sections. In the literature review, discuss what researchers and practitioners have learned from their studies of a similar or related question/topic. Select literature from a variety of topics that are related to your initial question/topic. Use headings and, if necessary, subheadings, to clearly label the component parts/themes of your literature review. Among the articles that you cite, include at least one scholarly literature review (e.g., from Review of Educational Research). Such a source can be an excellent starting point and provide you with many other related references.

What still needs to be learned about the topic? What seem to be the gaps in the field’s understanding of your topic? How, if at all, might what you learn through your inquiry contribute to others’ understanding of this problem? (Note: Your inquiry is primarily to advance your own understanding.)

The conclusion summarizes major findings for each topic and integrates them to support the action research project. How does what others have learned about your topic inform how do you plan to investigate it? Connect this back to your initial question.

4. Action Research Methods Approach - 15 points

You will generate a 2–4-page paper that describes your research context and inquiry design (Parts 1 & 2). This will also include a 1-page plan for data collection and analysis (Parts 3 & 4) that you will complete the written part for Methods next semester.

✓ Grading Information

Grade Breakdown

Letter Grade	Total Points

A+	98-100 points
A	94-97 points
A-	90-93 points
B+	87-89 points
B*	84-86 points

*DEPARTMENT GRADING POLICY

All MA students must receive GPA 3.0 with grades of B or better in each MA class to be able to continue the coursework. An "Incomplete" is given only when 80% or more of work has been completed.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9 \(PDF\)](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the [Syllabus Information](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>) web page. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Course Schedule

EDSE 285 Course Schedule

Course Schedule is subject to changes

Date	Content	Readings	Assignments Due	CLOs
1/26	Course Overview	Syllabus & Canvas		1, 2,3
In-person	Introduction to Action Research	Action Research in Special Education (website)		
2/2	Prepare Problem of Practice Statement	Sagor & Williams Ch. 1		
Asynchronous				

2/9 in-person	Problem of Practice Statements Introduction	Sagor & Williams Ch. 2		1, 2
2/16 Asynchronous	Research Resources <i>Write Introduction</i>	SJSU Library OneSearch, MLK Library	First draft: Introduction	1
2/23 In-person	Conceptual Framework Literature Review	Sagor & Williams Ch. 3	Final Draft: Introduction	3
3/2 Asynchronous	<i>Write Conceptual Framework</i>	Sagor & Williams Ch.4	First Draft: Conceptual Framework	2
3/9 In-person	<i>1:1 Meetings</i>	Sagor & Williams Ch.5	Final Draft: Conceptual Framework	2,3
3/16 Asynchronous	<i>Write Literature Review</i>	Sagor & Williams Ch.6	First Draft: Literature Review	1,2,3,4
3/23 In-person	Action Research Methods	Sagor & Williams Ch.7		4
3/30	<i>Spring break</i>			
4/6 In-person	Writers Workshop: Literature Review	Sagor & Williams Ch.8		
4/13 Asynchronous	<i>Write Methods</i>	Sagor & Williams Ch.9	First Draft: Methods	
4/20 In-person	<i>1:1 Meetings</i>			

4/27 Asynchronous	Planning for Fall 2026: Action Research Project		Final Draft: Literature Review Final Draft: Methods	
5/4 In-person	End-of-Semester Presentations		End-of-Semester Presentations	