

Program Description:
"Action Research in Education"

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Rationale

Vision. This program is designed to support teachers, administrators, and stakeholders to conduct action research in conventional and online classrooms, schools, districts, and other learning organizations to improve teaching and student learning.

Challenge. The challenge is to support educators and stakeholders to learn about and apply the foundations of educational research to achieve the vision. This challenge expects professional educators to embrace and use action research, plan collaboratively for its successful implementation, and make on-going adjustments and improvements based on the results of action research projects.

Context. What comes to mind when someone mentions *research*? And then uses the phrase *research-based* to describe a teaching method. In education today, professionals are challenged regularly to use standards, methods, assessments, and school improvement practices that are grounded in reliable and valid research studies. This trend envisions 21st century teachers and administrators as professionals who apply research as an integral part of their daily role and responsibilities. What, then, do these research expectations mean for school and instructional improvement?

- "Does my school value basic or action research as a strategy for school and instructional improvement?"
- "How can advanced quantitative and qualitative research strategies and techniques be adapted for action research projects?"
- "How do school principals motivate teachers to apply research findings in their conventional and online classrooms?"
- "What research strategies are practitioners likely to use for improving school practices on a daily basis?"

- "What does it mean when someone says an instructional strategy is "researched-based?"
- "How do teachers and administrators find time to conduct research and reflect on the results before making decisions?"
- "How can teachers and administrators use web-based tools and social media to conduct action research in the 21st century?"

Solution. *Action Research* is a type of applied research conducted by professional educators for school and instructional improvement. It employs a variety of methods that incorporate both qualitative and quantitative approaches. On the one hand, action research is less sophisticated than basic research methods that require complex statistical models and its results may not generalize to other groups or educational levels. On the other hand, action research promotes and supports data-driven thinking and decision-making, ensures continuous improvement, and leads to improved practices in classrooms and schools. And it has the capacity to produce improvements rapidly because educators typically conduct the research in their workplaces.

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Learning Standards

Learning standards describe what successful program participants are expected to learn in the program to conduct action research in conventional and online classrooms, schools, and districts. This program's learning standards are further defined into and aligned with:

- **Indicators** that describe the specific intent of each standard.
- **Products and Performances** that describe what a program participant is expected to know, perform, or construct to demonstrate successful attainment of the learning standards and indicators *for this program*.

The learning standards, indicators, and products and performances for this program are organized in the following three programmatic areas.

I. Understanding Action Research

Learning Standard. Acquire new and extend current knowledge, skills, strategies, and resources for making informed decisions about educational problems through action research.

Indicators. Program participants will:

1. Define action research within the context of established research paradigms
2. Describe the importance, essential elements, and benefits of action research
3. Analyze definitions, concepts, principles, and methods of action research
4. Evaluate the efficacy of action research models to improve teaching and student learning
5. Formulate a challenge and scope of work for a school-based team to carry out an action research project plan

Program Products and Performances. Throughout the program, participants working in an action research team will:

- **Professional Blog.** Help to launch and update an Action Research Team Professional Blog for chronicling the progress and results of developing an action research project plan to improve teaching and learning. **[Expected Team Product]**

II. Constructing Action Research

Learning Standard. Develop an action research project plan to improve teaching and student

learning in school-based, online, or blended venues.

Indicators. Program participants will:

1. Formulate a clear problem statement and aligned research questions
2. Complete a review of literature and research to provide context for the problem
3. Design a set of methods and strategies for conducting an action research project
4. Develop the display layouts and templates for collecting and analyzing data
5. Organize a plan for applying the results of data analyses

Program Products and Performances. By the end of the program, participants working in an action research team will:

- **Action Research Project Plan.** Help to construct an Action Research Project Plan for investigating a specific problem in a school, online, or blended learning venue.
[Expected Team Product]
-

III. Applying Action Research

Learning Standard. Publish recommendations in a global research learning community for using the results of action research to improve teaching and student learning.

Indicators. Program participants will:

1. Generalize what they learn to a related problem or new situation
2. Apply what they learned to their career or employment setting
3. Analyze results of action research projects to establish benchmarks of quality
4. Propose strategies to implement and fund benchmarks of quality
5. Make recommendations for further action research projects

Program Products and Performances. By the end of the program, participants working in an action research team will:

- **Professional WikiTask.** Help to post an Action Research Team Professional WikiTask for sharing the results of action research to improve teaching and student learning.
[Expected Team Product]
-

Sources: These learning standards were adapted from LearningFront school and instructional improvement standards and projects developed and delivered collaboratively with local school systems, teacher education institutions, and national organizations. And they are aligned with content and resources in professional textbooks, websites, blended learning activities, and assessments for the program.

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Program Components

Purpose

This purpose of this program is to provide participants with professional knowledge, skills, and resources needed to become actively engaged in *Action Research Projects* to improve teaching and student learning in school-based, online, or blended venues.

Audience

The program is designed for aspiring and experienced professional teachers and administrators who want to learn about and apply action research projects to improve teaching and student learning.

Description

The program is customized for participants by relating the learning standards and activities to their needs, interests, and selected areas of interest for action research. Participants learn to acquire and demonstrate action research knowledge and skills including, but not limited to, quantitative and qualitative approaches; descriptive, correlational, and case study methods; and survey, observation, and social media tools. They create a global research learning community, work individually and in action research teams, analyze demonstrations and video episodes, use a computer, access information on the Internet, publish blogs, develop action research plans, and post WikiTasks. The program supports participants to develop a framework for understanding, designing, and evaluating applied and action research in their field and to engage in continuous improvement during and after the program.

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Approach

The program approach provides information, engages participants in practice activities, applies classroom and online learning to real world action research initiatives, and uses technology to support program products and performances for learning about action research.

Information. This program component provides key topics, questions, and issues related to each learning session. It gives the participants the resources necessary to practice and apply the knowledge learned in each session. Participants use Internet information services such as email, professional and social networking, search engines, wikis, and blogs to learn about research findings and to benchmark best practices.

Practice. This program component provides participants with opportunities for hands-on learning online and in classroom and computer lab settings. Practice activities help participants to reinforce knowledge and to try new ideas and approaches prior to applying the knowledge in any classroom, school, or online setting.

Application. This program component helps participants to consider action research in the school setting. It sets the stage for applying what is learned in the program to school and instructional improvement goals and needs. Coaching and assistance are available to support follow-up application activities through LearningFront syzygy, colleague, team, and instant messages among participants.

Learning Community. This program component invites participants to register at LearningFront.com, tell the learning community about themselves and their ideal colleagues and teams, and share their best practices to help others learn about action research. Then, LearningFront integrated social media and professional development tools offer alternative blends of people, teams, resources, and action research methods and strategies to improve teaching and student learning. And, peers, instructors, experts, and LearningFront consultants deliver online blended coaching to support and enhance the collective intelligence of the learning community.

Delivery. This program component helps participants to extend current and acquire new skills and knowledge about action research through teaching strategies known as **Online** and **Online2**. Using the Online strategy, participants work independently using eLearningTeacher with a computer connected to the Internet. Using the Online2 strategy, participants combine their Online work using LearningFront concurrently with face-to-face instruction by an instructor and in classroom activities with other participants. Both strategies are supported by face-to-face coaching and online coaching using LearningFront tools and web conferences.

The online component of the program is delivered through LearningFront.com. LearningFront is unique because it combines social media with web-based professional development tools for teaching and learning any subject, with any person, anytime, anywhere with a computer connected to the Internet. It helps participants and teams to learn, develop, co-create, mash

and remix, and share on demand. All program participants share comments and resources through syzygy updates, use instant messaging, send and receive colleague and team messages, invite friends and associates to join a team, form a network of colleagues, and locate colleagues with similar backgrounds and passions for action research. These online features demonstrate how LearningFront breaks down content, communication, time, and location barriers as colleagues collaborate, co-create, and share to apply action research methods and results.

LearningFront offers a web-based application known as eLearningTeacher for organizing and delivering instruction and assessment through LearningLayouts. This program includes eight LearningLayouts, which are subdivided into sessions, activities, and steps. These features are supported by text, graphics, animations, video, email, and social media such as instant messaging and colleague and team messages. LearningFront also helps participants to use TaskBuilderOnline to develop action research project plans.

Worldwide Information Services. This program component helps participants to become familiar with and extend current knowledge and skills about advanced search services for action research. These include, but are not limited to, communicating with colleagues; sharing and accessing classroom lessons, materials, and software; conducting on-line research and development activities, and sharing ideas and thoughts in real time through Syzygy. These information services are integrated into products and performances completed by participants during the program and in participant workplaces.

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LearningLayouts, Schedule, and Outcomes

The program includes eight LearningLayouts that are delivered Online or in combinations of Online and Online2 settings according to schedules posted in school district professional development programs, college catalogs, and eLearningTeacher program listings. The LearningLayouts, schedule, and outcomes may be modified for independent study or home school professional development.

LearningLayouts:

1. **Program Home and Self-Assessment.** Relates to understanding and monitoring the program description, products and performances, and schedule and the participants' background knowledge and progress in the program.
2. **Tools for Action Research.** Relates to the foundations of educational research, definitions, social media and advanced search tools, multidimensional models for action research, and benchmark studies of action research in education.
3. **Task I: Define the Problem.** Relates to clarifying the purpose for undertaking an action research project, including selecting a topic, developing a thesis statement, asking research questions, and describing its significance.
4. **Task II: Review the Literature.** Relates to describing the rationale and setting for an action research project, conducting and writing a review of literature supported by advanced search tools, and defining terminology and acronyms.
5. **Task III: Design the Methodology.** Relates to selecting and adapting an action research plan, including alignment with the problem and review of literature and describing the approach, methods, type of design and data tools, and implementation schedule.
6. **Task IV: Analyze the Data.** Relates to the collection, organization, interpretation, and analysis of data collected during the action research project, including user-friendly data displays, reporting formats, and sharing strategies.
7. **Task V: Apply the Results.** Relates to the summary, conclusions, and recommendations gleaned from an action research project, including the degree to

which they answer the research questions, generalize to other settings, and contribute to the knowledge base for improving teaching and student learning.

8. **Portfolio Assessment and Kaizen.** Relates to developing a habit of mind and skills for using action research to improve teaching and student learning and to increase personal productivity and Kaizen -- the process of continuous improvement.

Schedule: [Click here for the Loyola University Maryland 2012 First Summer Session Schedule.](#)

Outcomes of Program: Professional Knowledge and Skills

As a result of successfully completing the program LearningLayouts, participants will gain the professional knowledge and skills for conducting action research to advance knowledge about teaching and learning and improve educational processes and outcomes.

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Program Products and Performances

Expected: Each program participant is expected to complete the following products and performances to demonstrate achievement of the program learning standards according to criteria specified in formative assessment rubrics:

1. Professional Blog: Help to launch and update an Action Research Team Professional Blog for chronicling the progress and results of developing an action research project plan to improve teaching and learning. [Expected Team Product]

2. Action Research Project Plan: Help to construct an Action Research Project Plan for investigating a specific problem in a school, online, or blended learning venue. [Expected Team Product]

3. Professional WikiTask: Help to post an Action Research Team Professional WikiTask for sharing the results of action research to improve teaching and student learning. [Expected Team Product]

Summative Assessment: Each program participant will complete a portfolio assessment to self-evaluate successful demonstration of the program vision, challenge, and learning standards. The portfolio assessment will include a written reflection of approximately 500 words that describes how the program vision, challenge, and learning standards were achieved according to the [Portfolio Rubric Proficiency Levels and Descriptors](#).

- [Click here](#) for a slide show of the alignments among the expected program learning standards, products and performances, criteria for evaluating success, and the portfolio assessment.

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Criteria for Evaluation of Participant Performance

This program uses a portfolio assessment to measure the each participant's summative performance and to assign a final grade in higher education classes. Each participant's portfolio assessment will apply the following generic scoring rubric to measure progress toward and completion of the program vision, challenge, and learning standards. Program participants will consider the proficiency levels and descriptors below as they self-assess their professional performance in the program as part of an action research team. Participants may customize the proficiency level descriptors to describe their roles in a school, e.g., for a specific content area, grade level, or special student population.

The participants will determine a final proficiency descriptor or grade based on the evidence in their portfolios relative to the rubric proficiency levels and descriptors. Participants may seek external validation of their portfolio summative assessment by sharing it for feedback with a colleague, mentor, or other professional associates.

Portfolio Rubric Proficiency Levels And Descriptors

A- Exemplary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participates in all program activities and produces results that are supported consistently by research findings and promising practices;• Demonstrates in-depth understanding of program content knowledge, skills, concepts, and processes;• Enjoys learning consistently with other program participants and contributes significantly in a program action research team;• Attends all program sessions in accordance with the program schedule, stays on task, asks probing questions, and takes risks to facilitate learning;• Where appropriate, offers insightful interpretations or extensions of the program content knowledge, skills, concepts, and processes; and• Helps to complete all expected team program products at an exemplary level.
B- Proficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participates in most program activities and produces results that are supported frequently by research findings and promising practices;• Demonstrates substantial understanding of the program content knowledge, skills, concepts, and processes;• Enjoys learning frequently with other program participants and contributes substantially in a program action research team;• Attends sessions frequently in accordance with the program schedule, stays on task, asks probing questions, and takes risks to facilitate learning; and• Helps to complete the Action Research Action Plan and one other expected team program product at an exemplary level.
C - Novice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participates in some program activities and produces results that are supported sometimes by research findings and promising practices;• Demonstrates partial understanding of the program content knowledge, skills, concepts, and processes;• Enjoys learning sometimes with other program participants and contributes minimally in a program action research team;• Attends sessions sometimes in accordance with the program schedule, stays on task, asks probing questions, and takes risks to facilitate learning; and• Helps to complete only one expected team program product at an exemplary level.

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Software and Resources

Each participant will use the LearningFront.com colleague and team messaging systems, eLearningTeacher, TaskBuilderOnline, Syzygy, and other worldwide information services and advanced library search tools identified in the program references to complete program products and performances.

References

[Click here for a List of References](#)

Background of Instructor

[Click here for the program instructor's background](#)

Title and Description of Program for Use in Catalogs and Flyers

Action Research in Education. This purpose of this program is to provide teachers and administrators with professional knowledge, skills, and resources needed to become actively engaged in *Action Research Projects* to improve teaching and student learning in school-based, online, or blended venues.

Participants learn to acquire and demonstrate action research knowledge and skills including, but not limited to, quantitative and qualitative approaches; descriptive, correlational, and case study methods; and survey, observation, and social media tools. They create a global research learning community, work individually and in action research teams, analyze demonstrations and video episodes, use a computer, access information on the Internet, publish blogs, develop action research plans, and post WikiTasks.

The program supports participants to develop a framework for understanding, designing, and evaluating applied and action research in their field and to engage in continuous improvement during and after the program.

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