Introduction for Faculty Colleagues

Course
EDU 311 - Students learn how to investigate, evaluate and select content, methods and materials used in organizing and teaching language arts and social studies in the elementary school. They develop appropriate curricula and examine personal beliefs and dispositions. They design and implement differentiated lessons based on state standards and develop technology-enhanced, integrated learning units. They gain a sound pedagogical knowledge base, an understanding of the importance of inquiry and professionalism, and have opportunities to participate in a community of learners. A concurrent internship offers opportunities to apply concepts and skills.

Rationale
The purpose of the Academic Content Research Paper is to have students investigate a content area in order to increase conceptual understanding and expand depth of knowledge. This type of inquiry helps students when planning a unit of study for children in their classrooms. This assignment will also be used as a piece of evidence in each student’s elementary education licensure portfolio to demonstrate depth of content knowledge. In the book, Understanding by Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), the authors note that the curriculum development process begins with deciding what knowledge is essential and enduring to the discipline. They offer four guidelines for sorting through the numerous possibilities. Teachers should consider:

1. the enduring value of the content beyond the classroom;
2. the ideas that are central to an understanding of the discipline;
3. frequently confused ideas or misconceptions; and
4. the potential to engage student interest.

NCPTS Standard #3, Content Knowledge
- Teachers know the content appropriate to their teaching specialty.
• Teachers recognize the interconnectedness of content areas/disciplines.

Learning Outcomes
• Explain the importance of a depth of content knowledge for the elementary teacher
• Locate and use elementary content standards to articulate enduring understandings and theoretical connections within a discipline
• Locate and evaluate resources that outline key subject-area content which includes ways of knowing
• Demonstrate a depth of content knowledge in a chosen disciplinary content area including an understanding of how knowledge is generated in that content area.
• Describe multiple perceptions related to a content area
• Use accurate APA format to demonstrate breadth of research

The Assignment I Distribute to Students
EDU 311 - Principles of Learning and Teaching I: Language Arts and Social Studies Methods and Materials
Academic Content Research Paper

Assignment Description
1. Use the NC Professional TEACHING STANDARDS and any disciplinary pre-service teacher standards to develop a rationale for why depth of content knowledge is important for elementary classroom teachers. [about 1 page]

2. Select an area of disciplinary content that is significant in the field (a major understanding, concept, controversy or question) and that would potentially be the knowledge base for a comprehensive unit of study. Look across grade levels to determine where this content is taught. Provide the grade level(s) and the Standards.

3. Use state and/or national CONTENT SPECIFIC standard documents to determine and explain: [about 2 pages]
   a. the big ideas or enduring understandings of this content
   b. the theoretical connections within the discipline
4. Evaluate and choose appropriate sources of information about the content that include research-based articles, books, chapters, textbooks, etc. Be sure to read and cite literature that is conceptual, theoretical or empirical. **Summarize your main findings or understandings about the topic in a way that shows your depth of knowledge about this topic.** Note areas in the literature that are being researched or that are controversial or conflicting. Sometimes it might be useful to use representations as tools to communicate your thoughts. Hand drawn representations are better than those copied/pasted from the Internet (it is easy to copy and paste and not really understand) [about 4-5 pages]

5. Determine **how an understanding of knowledge in the discipline is generated** (e.g., make note of and discuss the kinds of data/evidence that have been used to study the content. For example, is most of the evidence based on qualitative or quantitative studies, surveys, case studies, classroom-based or laboratory-based research, with small or large numbers of participants, etc.?). [about 1 page]

6. Describe the **frequently confused ideas, misconceptions or alternative conceptions** related to this content. [about 1 page]

7. Provide a **bibliography** that demonstrates a depth and breadth of research efforts. Use APA format for the bibliography as well as throughout the document. At least one source must be a research-based article or book.

Papers should be written in narrative format, double-spaced in 12-point font, 8-10 pages in length (not including bibliography), and adhere to the criteria outline on the attached rubric.

**References**

## Assessment of the Content Paper

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rationale</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale is not provided OR does not connect to standards OR does not provide a logical rationale for teacher depth of content knowledge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connection to Standards</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not provided or incorrect.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Knowledge Including Explanation Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Demonstrates some understanding of content knowledge. Has some trouble identifying the significance of the topic to the discipline and the connections between the literature and the topic. There is lack of deep understanding of the topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Performance Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge in the Discipline</td>
<td>Not provided or incorrect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative Conceptions</td>
<td>Not provided or incorrect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper as a whole: Completeness</td>
<td>Identifies a topic that is significant. Provides limited sources that do not necessarily address an understanding of the topic. Draws few conclusions from the data and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper as a whole: Theoretical Base</td>
<td>Collects limited data and information appropriate to the topic and discipline. Cites literature to support the ideas in the paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria</td>
<td>Performance Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paper as a whole: Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>Lacking a logical sequence which exhibits a clear beginning, middle and end.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 1  
*Why Depth of Content Knowledge is Important*

During our class brainstorm we discussed the importance of depth of content knowledge as identified by the NC Professional TEACHING STANDARDS. Using our discussion in class and your personal background knowledge develop a rational discussing why depth of content knowledge is important. Please be sure to do the following:

- Use at least 300 words in no more than 330 to create a rational that addresses the following:
  - Summarize the information that we have discussed
  - Provide justification as to why depth of content knowledge is
  - Your rational should be clear, concise and convincing
  - Use 12 point Font

Part 2  
*Big Ideas or Enduring Understandings*

We have been examining the NC Essential Standards for Social Studies. It is now time to begin turning our attention to unit planning by zeroing in one specific standard.

1. Select a standard from the NC Essential Standards for Social Studies that potentially would be the knowledge base for a comprehensive unit of study. Look across grade levels to determine where this content is taught. Provide the grade level(s) and the Standards.

2. Find the NCSS disciplinary theme that correlates with your chosen standard. In 200-250 words describe how the essential standard relates to the NCSS theme.

3. In 150-200 words, synthesize this information, beginning to formulate at least 3 enduring understandings or big ideas that are connected to the standard/theme.
Part 3
Prospectus

Now that you have decided on a big idea for your academic content paper, you will schedule a meeting with Patrick Rudd (prudd@elon.edu). During this meeting you and Patrick Rudd will discuss possible directions of your research and resources available regarding your content. At the conclusion of your meeting, you will create a prospectus – which is intended to help you begin structuring your academic paper and describe the direction you will take. Use the following questions to help guide your thinking. Summarize your thoughts in a 500-600-words.

- What question do you intend to address in your paper?
- What makes this topic interesting and relevant?
- Why is this topic significant to social studies education?
- Explain the background of this research topic.
- What areas in the literature that are being researched or that are controversial or conflicting?
- Attach a preliminary bibliography of peer-reviewed scholarly articles or books that seem relevant to your big idea.

Part 4
Exploratory Essay – Checking in 1

Write a first-person, chronologically organized account of your thinking process as you explore possible ideas relating to your big idea. Begin by describing what the question is, how and why you became interested in it, and why it is problematic for your (that is why you can not answer it). Then as you contemplate the problem and do research, narrate the evolving process of your thinking.

Include three kinds of information for your reader:

1. External details of your search (coffee shop conversations, trips to the library, methods for finding sources – the narrative “story” of your search);
2. Summaries of the new information from research, interviews, primary sources; and
3. Your own internal mental wrestling to make sense of new material (what you were thinking about, how your ideas were evolving – changing your mind, experiencing confusion or “aha!” moments.)

For this essay, it doesn’t matter whether you reach a final position or solve the problem; your reader is interested in your process, not your final product. Make your exploratory essay an interesting intellectual detective story – something your readers will enjoy!

---

**Part 5**

**In-Class Peer Review Workshops - Checking in 2**

You have been work diligently on generating your content papers. Now let’s check in with each other! In groups of three we will conduct peer-reviewed writer’s workshop, using the following guidelines.

1. For class you will bring three copies of your rough draft and pass them out to your group members.

2. Each person will read the drafts silently.

3. Group members will divide a sheet of paper into three columns to be headed +, −, ?. In the + column, note aspects of the draft that worked well. In the − column, note problem areas and any negative reactions, such as disagreements with ideas. In the ? column, note questions that occurred while reading, such as places that need clarification or further development.

4. Each group member, in turn, explains to the writer what he or she found to be effective or ineffective, what parts were clear or confusing, and so forth. You will also complete the content paper rubric for each paper you read. Group members do not give advice; they simply describe their personal responses to the draft as written.

5. The writer will take notes during each response but does not enter into a discussion (The writer listens without trying to defend the piece or explain “what I meant”.)

6. After each group member has responded to a writer’s essay, the next group member reads his or her essay. Continue the cycle.