

Educ 300: Ed Reform

Research Proposal Guide

Objective: Each student must submit proposals and write a final research paper (approximately 8-10 pages) on **change and/or continuity over time** regarding any topic in education reform. The proposal and paper must fulfill specific criteria, particularly in the use of questions, claims and evidence drawn from appropriate source materials.

Step 1: Brainstorm and write down ideas for possible research topic

The boundaries are quite broad, since you may research *any topic* related to education reform at virtually *any level* of the schooling system:

- child care, elementary & secondary, higher education, or non-institutional
- Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, United States, or international
- classroom level, school level, district level, national level, or related levels

Step 2: Explore the range of source materials available regarding your topic

Use your information literacy skills to explore both PRINT and DIGITAL source materials. Devise search strategies using the suggested "Research Worksheet." If there are too many sources available, start narrowing your focus. If too few, then expand it. Consult with librarians.

Step 3: Transform your topic into an appropriate research question that can be answered using available source materials

Types of appropriate research questions that address change and/or continuity over time:

historical origins	<i>How did X first arise at this period in time?</i>
historical causation	<i>What factors caused X to happen over time?</i>
multiple definitions of reform	<i>How did different reformers envision X over time?</i>
social history of human experiences	<i>How did group Y experience X over time?</i>
historiographical	<i>How have different historians interpreted X over time?</i>
policy formation	<i>How did X arise as a policy issue over a specific period?</i>
policy implementation	<i>How was X transformed from policy into practice?</i>

See Ed 300 syllabus for many more examples. Combinations of two or more questions, or the creation of the entirely new and appropriate questions, are strongly encouraged.

Types of questions that are NOT appropriate for an Educ 300 paper:

<i>What is the connection between X and Y?</i>	("connection" is too vague; no change over time)
<i>What if X became Y?</i>	(hypothetical question; usually no sources)
<i>How will group Y do X in years to come?</i>	(future speculation; usually no sources)

Examples of Research Questions from previous Ed 300 student papers:

- a) What was Maria Montessori's vision for early childhood education in Italy in 1900, and do present-day Montessori schools in the United States still follow her principles?
- b) There is no question that schools have gone through many changes since the 1970s, but has school violence really increased over the past twenty-five years, or has the media coverage altered our perception of the reality?
- c) Have Hollywood portrayals of urban teaching changed (with regards to perception of education, the classroom, and the role, and attitude of the school administrators) from the 1950s to the 1990s?
- d) National reports such as *A Nation At Risk* (1983) have declared US education to be in crisis, but does the long-term evidence support this claim?
- e) How did magnet school supporters justify their movement in Bridgeport CT in the late 1970s, and do they live up to those objectives today?
- f) Why are significant numbers of present-day African Americans turning away from school desegregation, a reform movement originally created with the goal of helping them?
- g) What was the original purpose of kindergarten as a separate grade, and is the Hartford school's current kindergarten curriculum still consistent with that goal?
- h) Since 1975, when the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was signed, how have the ideals of the original policy diverged from its actual practice in schools?
- i) In the years that have passed since Trinity's 1968 student lock-in, do alumni, faculty, and historians interpret the event and its meaning in different ways?
and many more. . . .

Step 4: Write your research proposals in this format

Research Question and its significance: Be sure to state it in the form of a question!
Ensure that it's appropriate for Educ 300
Add a paragraph justifying why it deserves to be studied.

Sources: Describe *where & how* you searched (see Research Worksheet)
Attach full citations for sources most relevant to your study
Add brief annotations for any sources you've had time to read
Think creatively about primary AND secondary sources.

Step 5: Post your research proposal as an attachment on Blackboard discussion board by Friday, March 28th at 6pm. (Approx length 2 pages; worth 10 points.) Sign up for an individual conference with the instructor to discuss your research project and next steps.