

Intro to Action Research in Special Education

EDSE 285

Fall 2026 Section 02 Hybrid 3 Unit(s) 08/19/2026 to 12/07/2026 Modified 08/26/2026

Contact Information

Instructor : Dr. Andrea Neubauer

Email: andrea.neubauer@sjsu.edu

Course Information

This course will adopt a hybrid classroom delivery format, with instruction divided between in person classsessions and online participation. Students will need access to a computer or tablet device with reliableinternet connectivity. If you do not have such a device, there are resources on campus that you can use. Besure 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 SuccessCenter (<http://www.sjsu.edu/at/asc>) located on the 1st floor of Clark Hall and in the Associated StudentsLab 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.) willbe available on Canvas. You are responsible for regularly checking both Canvas and your SJSU email (theone that ends with "@sjsu.edu") to learn of any updates. For Canvas support, please review the CanvasStudent Resources (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 if available FOR FREE from the university. If you do not have Microsoft Office on yourcomputer, please refer to Information Technology Service (<http://its.sjsu.edu/services/software/microsoft-students/index.html>) for information on how to download the software on your device.

Hybrid Schedule

Mondays

7:00 PM to 9:45 PM, Almond Ave Adult Education

1401 Almond Avenue, Livermore, CA 94550 Bldg D

Course Description and Requisites

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

Satisfies CGGWAR: Campus Graduate Graduation Writing Assessment Requirement.

Prerequisite(s): Department consent.

Grading: Letter Graded

* Classroom Protocols

Students are expected to arrive on time and stay for the entire class session, keep cell phones put away, and participate fully in seminar discussions. Zoom sessions are considered the same as in-person class sessions and students should make every effort to follow the same class protocols as they would when attending class on campus. Candidates are respectfully requested to refrain from engaging in other tasks that can distract their learning and the learning of others during Zoom class time.

It is expected that students will uphold the following norms and expectations during all course interactions, both in person and online.

1. Demonstrate Professionalism in the Course
2. Uphold High Expectations of Yourself and Others
3. Actively Engage in the Course
4. Utilize Technology Effectively
5. Self-Advocate
6. Be Culturally Responsive

(In-Class and Online / Adapted 2025)

- **Contribute thoughtfully** by addressing all parts of the collaboration prompt, whether participation takes place in class or online.
- **Ground your ideas in shared course content and academic research** (e.g., readings, frameworks, or common resources). Using shared references helps create inclusive discussions and supports meaningful interaction by giving everyone a common point of entry.
- **Connect theory to practice** by including examples from your classroom experience, fieldwork, or observations when relevant.

- **Engage with peers respectfully** by acknowledging contributions, building on ideas, and asking clarifying questions during in-person conversations or online discussions.
- **Use accessible and inclusive language** by spelling out acronyms, using person-first or identity-first language thoughtfully, and avoiding ableist or exclusionary terms.
- **Communicate professionally** with clear, organized writing or speech that supports shared understanding.
- **Remember that collaboration is for learning, not evaluation.** You are not responsible for grading or correcting peers; assessment and feedback are the instructor's responsibility.
- **Reflect the purpose of collaboration:** to develop collective understanding and strengthen professional practice through respectful exchange across learning spaces.

Academic Integrity

- a. Your commitment as a student to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University. The [Academic Integrity Policy S26-10](https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/S26-10%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy.pdf) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/S26-10%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy.pdf>) requires you to be honest in all your academic course work, which includes following the course restrictions on AI use and citing any AI use that was used if permitted. Faculty members are required to report all infractions, regardless of severity, to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development. Visit the [Student Conduct and Ethical Development](https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>) website for more information.
- b. SAID form to disclose AI usage [SAID form to disclose AI usage](https://the-said.pages.dev/) (<https://the-said.pages.dev/>)

Course AI Use Policy

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, or Bard can be powerful learning partners when used thoughtfully. They can help you brainstorm ideas, check clarity, and deepen your understanding of course topics. However, AI can't create your final submissions or replace the thinking and reflection you must do as you learn to make instructional decisions and grow into your professional voice.

You may use AI to:

- Summarize readings or lectures to support your studying.
- Brainstorm ideas or outline your thinking for assignments.
- Explore multiple perspectives or check the clarity of your writing.

You may not use AI to:

- Write or revise assignments, lesson plans, IEP goals, or reflections for submission.

- Replace your own analysis, professional reasoning, or application of course concepts.
- Create or fabricate citations, data, or references.

Inappropriate or unethical uses of AI include pasting your draft and asking AI to “make it better,” submitting AI-generated rewrites without adapting them, or using AI to “fill in” reflective or analytical sections. In those cases, AI becomes the creator, not a coach, and the final work no longer reflects your learning or professional judgment.

Responsible and Transparent Use

AI should support—not substitute—your professional growth. Use it as a guide, not a shortcut, and remember that your unique reasoning, creativity, and commitment to student learning are what matter most.

If you use AI to support your learning, use the [SAID form to disclose AI usage](https://the-said.pages.dev/) (<https://the-said.pages.dev/>) include a short note describing how it was used (for example: “AI was used to check clarity and suggest structure. All final analysis and applications are my own.”). This transparency helps maintain academic integrity and builds awareness of how these tools shape our thinking.

SJSU Cares Basic Needs Support:

If you are experiencing challenges with food, housing, or other basic needs, you are not alone and support is available through SJSU Cares. All enrolled undergraduate and graduate students can connect with SJSU Cares to explore available options and resources. To get connected, visit <https://www.sjsu.edu/sjsucares/> (<https://www.sjsu.edu/sjsucares/>), call 408-924-1234, or stop by the SJSU Cares office on the first floor of Diaz Compean Student Union West, across from the Engineering Building.

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

- **PLO 1** Assess and identify the educational needs and strengths of students with disabilities from diverse socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- **PLO 2** Critically evaluate pedagogy, curricula and instructional materials grounded in quality indicators of evidence-based practices for students with disabilities.
- **PLO 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 7 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

Part 1: What have others learned about your 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.

Part 2: What still needs to be learned about your 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.) Part 3: Conclusion. 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

*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.

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

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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

Course Schedule is subject to change

Date	Content	Readings	Assignments Due	CLOs
8/24	Course Overview	Syllabus & Canvas		1, 2,3
In-person	Introduction to Action Research	Action Research in Special Education (website)		
8/31	Prepare Problem of Practice Statement	Sagor & Williams Ch. 1		
Asynchronous				

9/14 Asynchronous	Problem of Practice Statements Introduction	Sagor & Williams Ch. 2		1, 2
9/21 In person	Research Resources Write Introduction	SJSU Library OneSearch, MLK Library	First draft: Introduction	1
9/28 Asynchronous	Conceptual Framework Literature Review	Sagor & Williams Ch. 3	Final Draft: Introduction	3
10/5 In person	Write Conceptual Framework	Sagor & Williams Ch.4	First Draft: Conceptual Framework	2

10/12 Asynchronous	Writers Workshop: Literature Review	Sagor & Williams Ch.5	Final Draft: Conceptual Framework	2,3
10/19 In person	Write Literature Review	Sagor & Williams Ch.6	First Draft: Literature Review	1,2,3,4
10/26 Asynchronous	Action Research Methods	Sagor & Williams Ch.7		4
11/2 In person	Write Methods	Sagor & Williams Ch.8	First Draft: Methods	
11/9 Asynchronous	1:1 Meetings	Sagor & Williams Ch.9		

11/16 In person	Revisions:Literature Review		Final Draft: Literature Review	
11/23 Asynchronous	Planning for Spring 2026: Action Research Project		Final Draft: Methods	
11/30 In person	End-of-Semester Presentations		End-of-Semester Presentations	