

**Western Carolina University  
EDSU 630 School Improvement ~ January, 2015  
Kingston, Jamaica**

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### **Conceptual Framework**

Western Carolina University has a strong and rich tradition of educating teachers. That tradition continues today as Western, along with its College of Education and Allied Professions, has evolved into the eighth largest producer of teacher education graduates of the forty-seven teacher education programs in the state of North Carolina.

The College of Education and Allied Professionals fulfills its mission by creating and nourishing a community of learners guided by knowledge, values, and experiences. The guiding principles of this community include the belief that the best education decisions are made after adequate reflection and with ethical consideration related to the interest, experiences, and welfare of the persons affected by the decision; appreciation of and respect for diversity; and the fostering of the responsible use of technology.

### **Diversity Statement**

Western Carolina University defines diversity broadly to include “exceptionalities, race, ethnicity, culture, religious background, gender, linguistic differences, socioeconomic level, and any of the other ways our society defines human and group differences, including age, geography, sexual orientation and national origin.” Accordingly, “a diverse faculty, staff and student body can be a catalyst for diversity of thought.” At the heart of our scholarly work is the appreciation of the distinction between an event and multiple interpretations. One expression of diversity of thought is a community that not only tolerates but also nurtures discussion of such sensitive topics as politics, religion and race.

My work in Jamaica over the last 25 years has been a life-changing experience for me. As we study school improvement ideas, all of us can help each other understand the perspectives that are rooted in our different cultures and lives.

### **Course Description**

EDSU 630 explores the school improvement process. We start by studying different conceptualizations or frameworks for improving schools. The social science paradigm dominates the field of education now. An emerging idea is called “improvement science.” And the

traditional way to conceptualize school improvement is through an aesthetic lens. (Improving schools is a performing art.)

### **Course Objectives and Competencies**

After this course students will be able to:

1. Conceptualize three different frameworks for school improvement (the social science paradigm, improvement science, and an aesthetic approach to improvement).
2. Understand the importance of the following organizational tasks in the improvement process: planning, organizing, coordinating, delegating.
3. Understand the significance of professional relationships in the process of school improvement.
4. Describe ways to work with teachers, parents, and community agencies to improve a school.

### **Texts for Course**

1. American Psychological Association Style [Recommended]
2. Hyacinth Evans (2001). *Inside Jamaican Schools*. Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.
3. Robert J. Marzano (2003). *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
4. Charlotte Danielson (2002). *Enhancing Student Achievement: A Framework for School Improvement*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
5. Hurley, J. C. (2009). *The Six Virtues of the Educated Person*. Lanham, MD: Rowman-Littlefield Education.

### **Links related to Jamaican Education**

- ❖ <http://www.moe.gov.jm/>
- ❖ <http://paws.wcu.edu/churley/resources.html>
- ❖ <http://paws.wcu.edu/churley/jamaicapaper.htm>
- ❖ <http://sixvirtues.com/watch-interview-on-jamaican-tv/>

## Course Requirements

Students contract for the grade they work toward. Attendance is required at all classes. Of course students have responsibilities that may prevent attendance at class. Whenever a student is absent he/she must contact me so appropriate makeup work can be submitted. The following are grade requirements:

Requirements for a C:

1. Read four books (APA Manual is a reference).
2. Participate actively in all class sessions, including group work.
3. Participate in GoToMeeting chats and complete any Blackboard assignments that might be needed to complete the course ("Blackboard" is the online program we use to extend the class into February).
4. Submit the written assignment for each book at a C level minimum.

Requirements for a B:

5. Submit a journal of reflections that you write at the end of each class session. The quality of this journal must be at a B level or better.

Requirements for an A:

6. Submit a paper in which you explain several needs in your school, and what it would take to make one of those improvements. This paper becomes your proposal for the School Improvement Project -- a program requirement. (This will be explained in class.) The quality of this proposal must be at an A level.

Rubric for Grading:

1. If I pick up your work and I see that you satisfactorily completed the assignment, you receive a 2.
2. If I pick up your work and I see that you satisfactorily completed the assignment and added some of your own ideas and experiences, you receive a 3.
3. If I pick up your work and I see that you satisfactorily completed the assignment, added your own ideas and experiences, and struggled with how best to present the ideas, you receive an 4.

Book Assignments:

1. Read Evans' *Inside Jamaican Schools* and write a report that discusses 2 ways that your school matches her descriptions of Jamaican schools and 2 ways that it does not. In your conclusion discuss the significance of this book to today's Jamaican schools.
2. Read Marzano's *What Works in Schools: Translating Research into Action*. List all the practices that he says "work in schools." Then explain one that will work in your school, or explain why none of them will work in your school.
3. Read Danielson's *Enhancing Student Achievement: A Framework for School Improvement* and write a report that describes two of her ideas that you like.
4. Read my book and answer these questions: (Since my book will be delivered later in January, we will read the home page of my website ([www.sixvirtues.com](http://www.sixvirtues.com)) and address the following questions):
  - a. Is being an "educated" person, or a good leader, more a matter of being virtuous, or of being knowledgeable and skillful?
  - b. Name a virtue that is not a combination of these six.
  - c. Describe a time when you can successfully learn or lead without demonstrating U, I, S, C, H & G?

- d. Think about your best teachers. Which of the six virtues did they demonstrate?
- e. Think about your worst teachers. Which vices did they demonstrate?
- f. If you are programming a computer to be the best possible teacher, which of the six virtues would you leave out? Which other virtues would you add?

### **Tentative Schedule of Activities/Assignments**

January 5	Introductions, syllabus, course, and program requirements.	Journal (10 minutes)
January 6	Discuss Evans book and your schools.	Journal (10 minutes)
January 7	Discuss Evans Book and assignment.	Journal (10 minutes)
January 8	Discuss Evans Book and assignment.	Journal (10 minutes)
January 9	Discuss Marzano book.	Journal (10 minutes)
January 12	Discuss Marzano book and assignment.	Journal (10 minutes)
January 13	Reports on Improvement Projects (What are you thinking about doing?)	
January 14	Discuss Danielson book.	Journal (10 minutes)
January 15	Discuss Danielson book and assignment.	Journal (10 minutes)
January 16	Discuss the six virtues and assignment	Journal (10 minutes)
January 19	Discuss the six virtues, the assignment and Blackboard meetings.	

### **Policy on Academic Honesty**

The University policy on academic honesty and plagiarism is spelled out in the Student Handbook. Students are expected to be academically honest. In addition to the specific offenses listed in the Student Handbook, it is not appropriate to submit a paper, project or other work for this class that was completed for another class. If you would like to further develop a topic on which you have previously worked, please submit a copy of the original work along with your proposal and indicate how the project for this class will differ from the original.