Course Description

This course is designed to prepare educational leaders with the knowledge and practical skills needed to lead school-level or district-level improvement initiatives within the unique context of the school.

Rationale

The USD Reflective Decision-Making model for preparing educators provides the framework supporting the School of Education professional programs. Reflective leaders are skilled educators whose practices and decisions draw upon the best available theory, research, and experiential wisdom. Reflective decision-making engages administrators in cycles of thought and action based on theoretical, ethical, and professional knowledge. The University of South Dakota strives to foster a globally inclusive learning environment where opportunities are provided for diversity to be recognized and respected.

Textbooks & Required Web Site Registration

The textbooks adopted for this course are:


The books listed above for this course can be purchased from Barnes and Noble at the University of South Dakota: call 605-677-6291 or email bn@usd.edu.

### Course Objectives/Outcomes – Standards – Assessment

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<tr>
<th>Objectives/Outcomes</th>
<th>Standards/Codes</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop and articulate a collaborative process for creating a data-informed mission and vision for a school</td>
<td>NELP 1.1</td>
<td>Class discussion posts, mid-term exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Articulate, advocate, model, and cultivate a set of core values that define the school’s culture</td>
<td>NELP 1.2</td>
<td>Examination of examples of achievement data reflection paper</td>
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<td>Identify school goals and determine whether school goals are aligned with the school vision and mission</td>
<td>NELP 1.2</td>
<td>Critical examination of school goals, vision, mission reflection paper</td>
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<td>Evaluate how well vision, mission, goals reflect an understanding of social, cultural, and intellectual needs of all students within the school community based upon a core set of values</td>
<td>NELP 1.2, 2.3</td>
<td>Critical examination of school vision, mission, goals reflection paper</td>
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<td>Examine multiple measures of data to assess school’s capacity for continual and sustainable school improvement</td>
<td>NELP 1.4</td>
<td>Activities, discussion posts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create a school improvement plan based upon analysis of multiple measures of data which ensures that the collective and individual needs</td>
<td>NELP 1.4</td>
<td>Final: School improvement plan project including review of literature, data analysis, and</td>
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of all students inform all aspects of schooling and creates a culture of continuous, responsive, sustainable, data-based school improvement

development of a school-based improvement plan

Demonstrate integrity, fairness, transparency, trust, collaboration, ethical behavior, and perseverance when working in professional learning communities

NELP 2.1, 2.4

PLC peer review discussions

### Teaching Philosophy

Preparing educational leaders is one of the most important jobs for the health and well-being of our society. You will be responsible for life altering decisions for the students in your building or district and these decisions will ultimately impact every aspect of society. My role as a teacher in an educational leadership program is to 1) make sure that you understand the enormity of your role; 2) ensure that you are ready for this responsibility; 3) provide the support that you need to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions you will need as an educational leader. So, I take this very seriously and expect that you will too. My philosophy is to have **high expectations with a lot of support**. I want you to succeed so that every student has the leader and teacher s/he/they deserve.

Please let me know how I can help you on your journey as an emergent leader. I respond to emails within 24 hours most weekdays. I do not respond to emails on the weekend, but I check my email on Friday at 5 p.m. for any last-minute questions before the weekend. You can also expect a weekly podcast (audio) which will clarify some frequently asked questions and prepare you for the next assignment. Students seem to really appreciate this. They have asked for video as well, so I am working on that, but I have yet to perfect it!

### Instructional Methods and Activities

#### Online Instruction

This course will be presented over the Internet using the D2L program as provided by the University of South Dakota. If this is your first online course at the University, I would suggest that you review the new [CDE Online Orientation Guide](#) for online learning for valuable information to help you be successful as an online learner.

The instructional methods for the course include lecture notes, collaborative discussions, collaborative activities, readings, reflective essays, practice data analysis, a mid-term, and a culminating school improvement plan based upon an authentic “problem” in your own context. This plan will follow the Victoria Bernhardt Continuous Improvement Plan model.

**Technology.** Desire 2 Learn (D2L) will be the course management software for this course. The University has established minimum hardware and software requirements to ensure the effective delivery of USD online courses. These are outlined under the “Technology Support and
Course and University Policies

University Policies

Academic Integrity

The University of South Dakota considers plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty inimical to the objectives of higher education. The University supports the imposition of penalties on students who have been adjudicated to have engaged in academic dishonesty, as defined in the “Conduct” section of the University of South Dakota Student Handbook, and South Dakota Board of Regents policy 2-33 [www.sdbor.edu/policy/Documents/2-33.pdf].

No credit can be given for a dishonest assignment. A student found to have engaged in any form of academic dishonesty may, at the discretion of the instructor, be:

a. Given a zero for that assignment.
b. Allowed to rewrite and resubmit the assignment for credit.
c. Assigned a reduced grade for the course.
d. Dropped from the course.
e. Failed in the course.

Freedom in Learning

Under Board of Regents and University policy student academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. Students who believe that an academic evaluation reflects prejudiced or capricious consideration of student opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards should contact the dean of the college or school that offers the class to initiate a review of the evaluation.

Disability Accommodation

Any student who feels s/he may need academic accommodations or access accommodations based on the impact of a documented disability should contact and register with Disability Services during the first week of class or as soon as possible after the diagnosis of a disability. Disability Services is the official office to assist students through the process of disability verification and coordination of appropriate and reasonable accommodations. Students currently registered with Disability Services must obtain a new accommodation memo each semester.

Please note: if your home institution is not the University of South Dakota but one of the other South Dakota Board of Regents institutions (e.g., SDSU, SDSMT, BHSU, NSU, DSU), you should work with the disability services coordinator at your home institution.
Diversity and Inclusive Excellence

The University of South Dakota strives to foster a globally inclusive learning environment where opportunities are provided for diversity to be recognized and respected. To learn more about USD’s diversity and inclusiveness initiatives, please visit the website for the Office of Diversity.

USD’s drop or withdrawal from course policy.

This course begins on Monday, January 7, 2019 and ends on May 3, 2019. The last day to drop the class and receive a 100% refund is Wednesday, January 16, 2019. Again, dropping the course after January 16, 2019 means that the student is fully financially responsible for the course in the event of a “drop,” whereby some credits remain for the semester, or are partially responsible for the course in the event of a “withdrawal,” whereby all credits for the semester are dropped. The latter is based on the date of the withdrawal. The last day to drop the class with a grade of “WD” is Monday, April 11 2019. Faculty members have the right and responsibility to drop a student from the course if the student is not responding, progressing, or participating.

Course Policies

Readings: This class hones your knowledge, skills, and dispositions as an adaptive, instructional, and transformational leader. You will be asked to thoroughly read, reflect upon, and apply theories and concepts from textbooks, professional peer reviewed articles, websites, and lecture notes (KNOWLEDGE). There is a lot of reading in this course and it is expected that you will read each assignment in its entirety and use a close reading strategy (reading more than the titles of paragraphs and italicized words). I know that many of you “hyper” read, which is a result of the constant stream of information at your disposal. While this works for some purposes, you will also be asked to approve IEPs, data reports, and external communication (SKILL/DISPOSITION). This requires close reading, therefore, this course asks that you read the chapters and professional articles with care and your full attention. If you are still reading this, then you have just practiced close reading.

Activities: If I lost you in the first paragraph on readings, go back and read it again. This course is designed to allow two weeks for each module to promote deeper critical reading and thoughtful application of theory to practice. You will be required to complete bi-weekly activities, weekly discussion posts, and complete a culminating Continuous Improvement Plan project. Most of your dropbox activities prepares you to complete this final project. The bi-weekly schedule will require you to pace yourself as the work for each module requires more time than most students allot for one weekend. I acknowledge that you have responsibilities outside of this course and honor those responsibilities. That said, we are preparing you to become building and
district leaders with heavy, at times unrelenting, schedules. Therefore, breaking long term projects/goals into smaller more manageable steps is a critical disposition (DISPOSITION) for you to acquire in your educational leadership preparation. There is also an essay mid-term exam. This course should be compatible with your internship requirements. I strongly urge you to work with your mentor to develop a continuous improvement project that responds to your context and can be completed during your internship.

**Timeliness of work submission:** As an educational leader you will be asked to complete work for your supervisors (superintendents, school boards, attorneys, stakeholders) and by those whom you lead (teachers, principals, instructional coaches, coaches, counselors, staff, families, and students). This sandwich requires you to prioritize and balance a lot at one time (SKILL/DISPOSITION). In preparation for this balance, you will be expected to complete all work on time. I do not have a late submission policy (nor will your supervisor). If a serious life circumstance happens to you, please contact me immediately and we will work on a support plan for you. Otherwise, submit your work edited and on time. It is not always easy, but it is better to learn how to strike this balance now before you find yourself in the role of leader. I know that you have a family/job/part-time side hustle in addition to this course. I know it is a challenge. My advice is to carve out time in your life to do this right and honor each part of your life.

**Grading Scale:**

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<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90%-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>(306-340 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%-89%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>(272-305 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%-79%</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>(238-271 pts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60%-69%</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>(204-237 pts)</td>
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**Assignments (Graded within one week in the order of submission.)**

**Activities:** Activities will vary with each module, but most will support your work on the final project by offering practice or a framework for completion. 5@20=100

Activities will be assigned bi-weekly.

**What:** Students will respond to questions designed to make explicit connections between the texts and their own experiences.

**Why:** The activities will reflect an understanding of the texts and create an opportunity to apply the information to one’s own context and design for the school improvement project.

**How will I be graded?:** Each activity will be worth 20 pts and will be graded based upon the following rubric

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<th>Target</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Unacceptable</th>
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<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Content is substantive, graduate level work and provides not a summary but a synthesis/analysis/evaluation of ideas with clear connections to the text or articles and</td>
<td>Content begins to make connections to the text or articles and</td>
<td>Content is a shallow exploration of the text/articles and does not</td>
<td>Student does not submit a response or offers a poorly prepared and</td>
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</table>
Discussions: One discussion per module, 10 pts each (8@ 10= 80 pts) ***Note there are other discussions in the modules, but only the large group one will typically be graded. The others are meant to support your growth and understanding as an instructional leader. They are required as a participant in the course, but not graded to allow freedom to make mistakes and explore. (Not unlike a PLC team in a school whereby teachers are required to attend, and are held accountable to productivity, yet not necessarily “evaluated” on what happens in each PLC meeting.)

What: Students will post an initial response to a writing prompt by Monday morning 8 a.m. CT/USA. You will label this IR with your first name. Then you will read your classmates’ posts and post a response to at least 2 colleagues on two different days by the following Monday morning 8 a.m. CT/USA. We will use the small group discussion boards to work together to analyze data and gain support for our own projects.

Why: This is a graduate course not a correspondence course which means that there is a level of engagement as a class in addition to your independent work. While it is a bit more challenging to create a group presence in an online setting, that is my goal for this course. Teachers should be working in teams to practice analyzing data for instructional decisions. My intent in organizing the class into PLC teams and Data Leadership Teams is to prepare you to lead teams of teachers, not individual teachers.

How will I be graded?: You will be given 6 pts for a substantive IR written professionally with the second or third reader in mind. I want you to understand that anything you put in writing and send to teachers as a leader may be shared with others and without your permission. Therefore, it is critical that you post responses that your superior or a community member might read. While the style of writing can be more casual than a paper, it is still a reflection of you as a
professional. So keep it free of slang, texting language, and offensive comments. You will then be given 2 pts each for 2 substantive responses to peers for a total of 10 pts per discussion. Substantive means that your response is thoughtful, directly responds to the post, and pushes the conversation further.

**Discussion thread expectations/guidelines**

1. Please post your initial response on one day and then each of your response to other students two different remaining days. Label the initial response IR with your name (e.g. IR Dequanda) so that students will know it is the beginning of a new thread. Then, respond to others over the course of the next few days. This keeps you engaged in the conversation on an ongoing basis.

2. Please start each response to a colleague with the person's name to whom your response is directed. This helps us to easily identify and personalize response. However, responses should be viewed by everyone. Comments are welcome from anyone in the class.

3. **Quality responses** are expected. This is a professional dialogue among emerging leaders. It is not acceptable to simply respond by briefly stating "I agree." Responses should include a rationale for your reaction and/or a question to guide further discussion. Points will be awarded accordingly. A resource previous students have found helpful is Netiquette at [www.networknetiquette.net](http://www.networknetiquette.net). Netiquette is a cyber-word; the combination of the words network and etiquette. It describes the culture of the Internet. Specifically, it's the culture of how we communicate digitally through networks.

4. All voices will be honored. If you react strongly to a statement, wait before responding to give yourself time to consider the comment from the writer's perspective. It might be helpful to keep the list of contact information in front of you when participating in the discussions. I do this to help me understand the writer's frame of reference and situational issues. Points will be deducted for responses that do not resemble a professional and respectful response.

5. This is a professional community of learners, thus **professional language is expected. Do not use slang, profanity, or text messages** (shorthand). Your comments can be more casual than formal, but understand that this is a collegial dialogue among instructional leaders that might later be shared with your immediate superior, a school superintendent, or a school board member. Everything you put in writing is a reflection of you as a professional and may be shared without your permission. Please start to develop the habit of writing with an unintended second or third reader in mind.

6. Points are awarded for your initial response and for each response to a colleague. 10 points will be awarded for on time, high quality responses with a professional tone and a commitment to full participation in a professional dialogue (6pts for IR and 2 pts each for peer responses).

**Hint:** Throughout this course you will be posting and providing feedback to your fellow classmates on the Discussion Board. This can be a very valuable learning experience when the feedback is meaningful and insightful. Your feedback should be substantive enough for those reading your post to know that you read their remarks and genuinely reflected on the content.
Avoid just providing feedback such as “Great posting” or “I agree with everything you said” (unless you are simply offering encouragement from time to time). Feedback should have substance and mention the key point(s) from the original posting, citing relevant text when appropriate. Reflective comments might be a question, a specific point you do not understand, something you are adding to reinforce a point, or an example you want to share, etc. Please provide feedback within a few days of the due date for the assignment. This is a good time to begin posting comments "early and often." Remember, that the goal during an interactive discussion is to cause others to reflect upon your remarks, reply, and extend your comments.

**Discussion Dispositions:**

As we build a community of inquiry, consider that you will be the leader of a community of inquiry. Setting clear expectations for professional dialogue ensures that all participants understand what is meant by "professional dialogue". Establishing these norms for professional dialogue can become a critical component of a successful PLC. We will use the following dispositions in our discussion threads.*

*Hospitality* All are welcome in this discussion. Please make one another feel valued and welcome.

*Participation* Engage in the discussions to add depth and subtlety to the discussion.

*Mindfulness* Take time to understand the opinions of your peers and be respectful of their diversity of thought.

*Humility* Admit the limitations of your knowledge and opinions. We don't know what we don't know.

*Mutuality* Be concerned about your own learning and that of others.

*Deliberation* Offer arguments and counterarguments supported by evidence, data, and logic appropriately citing the resources that you use for information.

*Appreciation* Express your appreciation to peers for their thoughtful comments, insights, and challenges.


**Assessments**

Discussion threads (8@ 10 pts)

Activities (5@20 pts)

Mid-term exam (essay) (60 pts)

Final project (100 pts)