Final Paper Guidelines for MA Degree Participants

The first draft of your paper is due May 9, 2010. It is expected that you will have worked extensively with your Research Buddy on this draft prior to posting. This draft does need to include Author’s Notes and buddy response. Post it on Blackboard. You will receive further instructions about where on Blackboard to post it. Be sure to include your name in the file title (i.e., LewisDraft1.doc) If you aren’t using Word, please save your file in rich text format (rtf).

You will be given feedback on your first draft quickly, and your second draft will be due May 26, 2010. Expect at least one more round of feedback before your final draft is due in July, just prior to your master’s oral on July 26-27, 2010. It is possible you will be asked to make further revisions after your master’s oral and prior to your August graduation.

Your written product is an elaborated version of what those pursuing a MAT through the Department of Mathematics are doing. Yours is intended to be the summative work of your master’s degree, a major piece of scholarly work. You will also create a portfolio on your Math in the Middle experiences. You will receive directions for this later.

As you write, it is important you push yourself to the minimum length of each section described below. As you write, consider what you are doing as telling a story. You are writing a narrative.

See the handout “APA Notes” for instructions about the physical layout and mechanics of your paper, including how to format your paper and how to cite your references. This was handed out in January.

Your final paper should have a title page that looks like this, including all of the following information, centered vertically and horizontally on the paper, title in bold face.

Title of Your Paper Centered

Your Name
Your Hometown, NE

Math in the Middle Institute Partnership
Action Research Project Report

in partial fulfillment of the MA Degree
Department of Teaching, Learning, and Teacher Education
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
July 2010
On the second page of your report it should look like the following, centered vertically on the paper:

**Title of Your Paper Centered**

**Abstract**

Create a short summary of your paper (200 words), double-spaced. Your summary will say something like: In this action research study of my classroom of 7th grade mathematics, I investigated ______. I discovered that ____________. As a result of this research, I plan to ____________.

You now begin your paper. Pages should be numbered, with the first page of text following the abstract as page one. (In Microsoft Word: after your abstract, rather than inserting a “page break” insert a “section break” to start on the next page; this will allow you to start the 3rd page being numbered as page 1).

You should divide this report of your research into sections. We should be able to identity the following sections and you may use these headings (headings should be bold, centered, and capitalized). Consider the page length to be a minimum.

**I. Introduction** (4 pages minimum)

What is the topic of your inquiry?

How did you come to select it?

How does this topic to your current classroom practice?

Suggestion: Return to the Problem of Practice statement you wrote for TEAC 888 to help with this.

**II. Problem Statement** (1 page minimum)

Explicitly answer these questions:

- Why is this topic and the problem of practice worth knowing about?
- Why should anyone but you care about this problem?

Note: in this section you are foreshadowing the literature review.

**III. Literature Review** (8 pages minimum)
What does the scholarly literature have to say about your topic and this problem of practice?

You should use the literature review you wrote for TEAC 888 as a basis for this section. Your literature review should contain at least 10 research articles. Be sure to include an explanation of how your own study connects to and contributes to this body of knowledge. This explanation can be throughout your literature review, or at the end. Do not merely paste your TEAC 888 lit review into this spot. Revise it, paying attention to the overall flow of your paper. You will need to revise your introduction and conclusions to have transitions to the preceding and following sections of your paper.

IV. Purpose Statement (1 page)

Having identified the research problem and why others should care, describe the point of your project.

What is the purpose of your study?

What are you seeking to understand in your inquiry?

What are your research questions?

V. Method (2 pages minimum)

Here tell the story of your data collection.

How did you go about this study?

What data did you collect?

How did you gather it?

How did you organize the data?

How did you analyze the data?

Be sure to include the dates you collected data. If you ran into challenges or dilemmas during data collection, here is the place to briefly and concisely explain anything that may have happened that influenced your data collection.

Explain any instruments you used to help yourself with data collection and explain why you used these particular instruments. Make reference to your instruments and add them to your paper as appendices.

VI. Findings (13 pages minimum)
Look at your analytic memos. Many people find it helpful to organize this section around their research questions: one section for each research question. This helps the reader of your paper see that you did address all of your research questions.

**Describe your “average day” teaching** during this action research project (3 pages minimum); this should address all of the questions from analytic memo 2 & 3

What does your inquiry yield?

What does the data have to say about your research questions?

What are your findings?

How did you arrive at these?

What evidence do you have to support your findings?

**VII. Conclusions:** So what? (2 pages minimum)

What do your findings have to say to you as a teacher?

What do your findings have to say to others with similar problems of practice?

What scholarly literature do the findings of your research support or challenge? Go back to some of the articles from your lit review; you may seek out some additional research articles. Be very specific in detailing how your findings fit with or contradict other authors’ findings.

**VIII. Implications** (1 page minimum)

As a result of your study, what action(s) will you take next with regard to your classroom practice?

**IX. Author’s Notes & Buddy Responses**

You need to include at the end of your paper your Author’s Notes and buddy responses you received while working on drafts of this paper. It is expected that you will include at least TWO sets of notes/responses as part of this process. You may wish to also add some commentary about how you incorporated your buddy’s feedback into your later drafts. If you chose to not incorporate some of their suggestions, please explain.

**Total:** minimum 24 pages (double-spaced) of writing + literature review + title page, abstract page, Author’s notes & buddy responses, references and appendices
On a new page after the last page of writing, use the heading: **References.** Use the “APA Notes” handout to help draft your references in APA format. Your reference page from your lit review can serve as a starting point for this.

You need to include appendices. Each appendix should start on its own page and have a heading: **Appendix A** (then Appendix B, C, etc.). You might include your interview questions, copies of surveys, codes you used for watching videotape, graphs created as part of your data analysis, etc., as appendices. Any appendix you include should be referenced in the text. For example, if you say you used a set of interview questions in the methods section. After stating that you, you may say something like, see Appendix A. Appendices are a way to include important information but not distract the reader.

**WRITING HINTS**

Paragraphs, when properly written, generally take up one third of a piece of paper. One sheet of paper should roughly contain three paragraphs. If it has many more than that, it is likely the paragraphs are too short and ideas in separate paragraphs should be combined into one. If you have a page with just one paragraph, it is likely the paragraph is too long and should be broken into two parts, with separate main ideas.

When you turn in a draft, it is assumed that you have written several drafts prior to creating the “first” and “second” drafts to turn in. It is also assumed that your work has been proofread for content clarity and mechanics before being submitted. Spell Check is not enough. Please watch for complete sentences, full paragraphs, proper grammar, and correct punctuation. Your Research Buddies will help with this.

Pay attention to verb tense, especially when talking about your study. Use present tense to discuss the literature. Use present tense in discussing your hypotheses/findings, but use past tense to say what you did (data, typical day).