

# **Department of Curriculum and Instruction**

## **M.A. Plan A Thesis Requirements and Examples**

*In preparation for the Plan A thesis, the M.A. student must complete the following steps in order:* 1.

- File degree program [when approximately one-third (10 credits) of coursework is completed]
2. Construct a formal written thesis proposal according to program area requirements and distribute to committee (see below)
3. Hold formal meeting with committee and gain input from committee and written approval, to be submitted to C&I Graduate Studies office
4. Revise proposal as needed (may require another committee meeting or later signatures from the committee members depending upon the extent of revisions required)
5. If applicable, complete IRB application and wait for approval
6. Once IRB approval is achieved, begin data collection

### **The Plan A thesis:**

- requires 10 thesis credits (CI 8777)
- is a formal M.A. thesis (bound and submitted to Grad School), involving approx. 450 hours of work
- involves original research in the form of a “mini-dissertation” divided into chapters
- is likely to require human subjects (IRB) approval (see below), which must be obtained prior to beginning data collection
- requires a thesis proposal (see below), which must be written and presented to the committee for approval before the study begins.
- is submitted to the Graduate School

### **Plan A Thesis Proposal:**

Suggested contents of the thesis proposal include the following:

#### **Introduction and Statement of the Problem**

- Description of the problem you are studying, research questions and rationale

#### **Literature Review**

- An abbreviated critical review of literature related to your proposed study

#### **Proposed Methods**

- Information on the teaching context if applicable (i.e. number of students, type, setting, school, type of course, etc.)

- A written description of the proposed study including the research questions and a description of data sources, collection methods and approach to data analysis

#### Preparation and Qualifications for Conducting the Research

- A brief description of your qualifications for dealing with both the content and methodology of the study—relevant coursework, independent reading, experiential background, etc.

#### Appendix

- If applicable, Human Subjects Application (see below)

### **Final Thesis Text:**

Suggested contents of the final thesis include the following:

#### The Introduction and Statement of the Problem

- Description of the problem you are studying and the purpose of and rationale for the study.  
Includes a statement of research questions and the rationale for asking them.

#### Literature Review

- Critical overview of the literature related to your proposed study.

#### Methodology

- a detailed description of the design (e.g., the setting, the sample, the instrumentation, the data collection procedures, the procedures for analysis of the data),

#### Presentation of the Results

- Detailed description of the results as they correspond to research questions

#### Conclusion and Implications

- Conclusions, limitations of the research, recommendations for further research, and pedagogical implications

#### Bibliography, Resources and Appendices (if applicable)

- Full bibliographic information for all of the sources cited and resources used.
- If applicable, copy of the approval letter from the U of MN IRB.

### **Examples of Studies Showing Plan A Thesis Effort and Quality:**

*“Reading Strategies Instruction in Spanish and Its Influence on Reading Comprehension in English”* Conducted in an international school in Paraguay, this study explored the effect of reading strategy instruction in Spanish (the students’ native language) on their reading comprehension in English. Seventeen 5<sup>th</sup>-graders participated and received instruction in reading strategy use in Spanish over a 4-month period. Data sources included pre- and post-interviews, pre- and post-questionnaires involving a self-assessment of strategy use, and reading comprehension measures using the recall protocol procedure (3 times over 5 months) and oral fluency measures (3 times over 5 months). (involves IRB approval)

*“Word Women: Learning about Literacy from Extraordinary Girl Writers outside of the Classroom”* This descriptive analysis explores the literacy lives of extraordinary adolescent girl writers who have published their writing outside of the classroom. Based on a review of the literature, indicating that researchers have unearthed new layers of meaning by expanding literacy

studies beyond formal writing classrooms and curriculum, this study captures the voluntary out of-school writing practices of five girls, ages 11-18. Three primary questions guided this research: “What motivates young authors to write?” “How do these girls define themselves as writers?” and “What does their writing process look like?” Using open-ended interviews, electronic mail surveys, and published and unpublished writing samples, the researcher draws conclusions about the compelling and complex ways these girls use writing to express themselves and make sense of their world, and as a result of these discoveries, the ways in which we can reflect on writing pedagogy. (involves IRB approval)