

CRITICAL ELEMENT REFLECTIVE RESEARCH PAPER HANDBOOK

University of Northern Iowa

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Mission Statement

The Educational Leadership Faculty at the University of Northern Iowa develop and nurture reflective leaders of learning, service, and change who make a difference in creating healthy schools and communities.

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Requirements for Critical Element Reflective Research Papers:

All students in the Educational Leadership Program (M.A.E. and ASC) are required to write five exemplary critical element reflective research papers. Each paper will be organized using the following format.

- Title Page
- Introduction
- A reflection on and discussion of your personal characteristics--values, beliefs, and philosophies that you believe are essential for exemplary educational leadership [applies to paper 1 only]
- Describe what you believe about the Critical Element, support your beliefs with the literature and tell how you are going to implement your beliefs and relate it to the Iowa Standards for School Leaders (ISSL)
- A reflection on and discussion of your personal professional vision for administrative practice
- Conclusion
- References Page

Purpose of the Critical Element Reflective Research Papers:

No one comes to the study of educational leadership with a blank slate in terms of attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills. Coursework and other planned instructional activities comprising the M.A.E. and ASC Educational Leadership program are designed to shape and extend the knowledge, dispositions, and skills that the student brings to the program and to identify and develop those important for effective administrative practice. Personal experiences during the M.A.E. and ASC program and unplanned events in the program of study also may be very influential in the development of knowledge, dispositions, and skills.

The critical element reflective research papers are conceived as a personal statement that captures awareness and knowledge of self, the contexts, and nature of environments for educational administration, and the role of others (e.g., teachers, pupils, other administrators, community leaders, and parents) who together comprise the human element in those contexts and environments.

Procedure for Completing the Critical Element Reflective Research Papers:

You will be assigned to write five critical element reflective research papers. These papers shall be a minimum of five and maximum of seven pages in length (except for paper 1) and will be aligned with your coursework throughout the program. It is strongly recommended that papers be submitted electronically.

Final, corrected copies of papers are to be included in your Professional Portfolio.

Critical Element Papers 1 and 2 are assignments due for *Orientation to Educational Leadership (270:206)/ Educational Leadership (270:245)*

Critical Element Paper 1: My Philosophy of Educational Leadership

- Paper 1 is to be submitted to the instructor by the end of the first quarter. Assignment will be graded as part of the Orientation to Educational Leadership course.
- This paper should be a reflection of your personal values and belief system related to education and educational leadership.
- In this paper you may discuss why you became an educator, what you believe about education, and why you decided to enter the educational leadership program.
- The focus for this paper is your values and beliefs related to education and leadership which should be supported through the literature.
- Paper 1 needs to be three to four pages in length, double-spaced, typed in Times New Roman 12 font and APA style must be followed.
- The title you will use is: **My Philosophy of Educational Leadership**. The title page should include all the information shown in this Handbook on page 10.
- You are encouraged to discuss your values and beliefs related to education and leadership with your mentor to help you clarify what you want to include in your paper.

Critical Element Paper 2: Role of the Leader of Service

- Paper 2 is to be submitted to your advisor near the end of the course (Educational Leadership). Although no grade is assigned to this paper as part of the coursework, student will not receive a grade for the course until the paper is completed and submitted in a timely manner.
- What is the current research on the **role of the leader of service**? How does this research apply to me as a leader? How would I infuse and incorporate my research into my practice as the principal? How does my research connect or align with the ISSL Standards?
- Include a title page using the model found on page 10. Use a minimum of three sources. Include citations in the body of your paper. A References Page is to be included at the end of your paper. Be sure to follow APA Guidelines.

- The paper needs to be five to seven pages in length, double spaced, and typed in Times New Roman 12 font.
- You are encouraged to discuss each identified critical element for exemplary educational leadership with your mentor to help you clarify and focus your beliefs and research related to this critical element.

Critical Element Paper 3 is due for course *Change and Transformation (270:282)*

Critical Element Paper 3: Leader's Role in Educational Change

- Paper 3 is to be submitted to your advisor near the end of the course (Change and Transformation). Although no grade is assigned to this paper as part of the coursework, student will not receive a grade for the course until the paper is completed and submitted in a timely manner.
- What is the current research on the **leader's role in educational change**? How does this research apply to me as a leader? How would I infuse and incorporate my research into my practice as the principal? How does my research connect or align with the ISSL Standards?
- Include a title page using the model found on page 10. Use a minimum of three sources. Include citations in the body of your paper. A References Page is to be included at the end of your paper. Be sure to follow APA Guidelines.
- The paper needs to be five to seven pages in length, double spaced, and typed in Times New Roman 12 font.
- You are encouraged to discuss each identified critical element for exemplary educational leadership with your mentor to help you clarify and focus your beliefs and research related to this critical element.

Critical Element Paper 4 is due for course *Curriculum and Assessment (270:249)*

Critical Element Paper 4: A Reflective Practitioner as the Leader of Learning

- Paper 4 is to be submitted to your advisor near the end of the course (Curriculum and Assessment). Although no grade is assigned to this paper as part of the coursework, student will not receive a grade for the course until the paper is completed and submitted in a timely manner.
- What is the current research on being a **reflective practitioner as the leader of learning**? How does this research apply to me as a leader? How would I infuse and incorporate my research into my practice as the principal? How does my research connect or align with the ISSL Standards?
- Include a title page using the model found on page 10. Use a minimum of three sources. Include citations in the body of your paper. A References Page is to be included at the end of your paper. Be sure to follow APA Guidelines.
- The paper needs to be five to seven pages in length, double spaced, and typed in Times New Roman 12 font.

- You are encouraged to discuss each identified critical element for exemplary educational leadership with your mentor to help you clarify and focus your beliefs and research related to this critical element.

Critical Element Paper 5 is due for course *Evaluator Approval for Improved Student Learning (270:284)*

Critical Element Paper 5: *The Role of Leaders of Learning in Professional Development which is Designed for the Improvement of Learning for Students and Adults.*

- Paper 5 is to be submitted to your advisor by the fourth week of class (Evaluator Approval for Improved Student Learning). Although no grade is assigned to this paper as part of the coursework, student will not receive a grade for the course until the paper is completed and submitted in a timely manner.
- What is the current research on the **role of leaders of learning in professional development which is designed for the improvement of learning for students and adults?**
- Include a title page using the model found on page 10. Use a minimum of three sources. Include citations in the body of your paper. A References Page is to be included at the end of your paper. Be sure to follow APA Guidelines.
- The paper needs to be five to seven pages in length, double spaced, and typed in Times New Roman 12 font.
- You are encouraged to discuss each identified critical element for exemplary educational leadership with your mentor to help you clarify and focus your beliefs and research related to this critical element.

Guidelines for Writing the Critical Element Reflective Research Papers:

Guide to Reflective Writing & Thinking

In reflection, the focus of your writing is not simply **what happened**, but rather **why** it happened and **how** it will influence your actions in the future. Use these to guide your thinking:

- **Describe** what went on. What happened (in my class, at home, in my life).
- **Why** did this take place? What are the possible reasons this happened? What could possibly explain the individual's behavior? Why, might I suppose, did people respond that way? Why do I think this is so? What experiences have I had to make me feel this way?
- **So what?** What is significant about this? Does it matter? What are some reasonable ways I could respond? *What should I be learning* from this situation or event?

Reflection Rubric

Description	Stellar - Clear picture of what took place, leaves little or nothing to chance, does not assume reader knows the specifics.... <i>Explain it to a stranger from Alaska</i>	Reasonable - Author gives a general idea of pertinent events although some details are omitted, unclear, biased or inaccurate.... <i>A little hazy.</i>	Shaky - Details absent and writer's account leaves much in doubt. Author may assume reader knows a lot about the situation. Author editorializes without basis.
Analysis	Insightful - Analysis offers plausible and justifiable explanations of events AND author's interpretation of those events.... <i>Step back and look</i>	Hmmm, maybe -Analysis offers some possible explanations of events and explanations but only on the surface... <i>Go a little further, dig a little deeper.</i>	Missing in Action -Analysis is underdeveloped or absent. Author does not or is unable to offer reasons or hypotheses.
So What?	Oh really - Author effectively points to significance of events and how they apply to him/her <u>as a leader</u> . May also offer questions or challenges for the author's future	Maybe so - Author gives a couple or a few points about the significance of events and interpretation, but more is needed. <i>What am I going to do? What am I going to think about?</i>	I said, So WHAT? Author does not attack issues of significance as they apply to him/herself and identifies little or no significance about how s/he arrived at this view or future implications.

Four Aspects of Reflective Practice

1. **Describing** -- What do I do? Attempts to elicit a simple observational description of practice.
2. **Informing** -- What does this mean? Seeks to discover the principles of theories--in-use which underlie and drive the described practice.
3. **Confronting** -- How did I come to be this way? Is what I am doing most effective and efficient? Is it consistent with my values and beliefs?
4. **Reconstructing** -- How might I do things differently? Requires consideration of options and calls for action.

What is Reflective Practice?

- It emphasizes the primacy of practice.
- It engages the leader in a cycle of thought and action based on professional practice.
- It portrays the leader as a creative artist/designer rather than an engineer/technician.
- It calls for personal and professional transformation because it is action oriented.

Use of APA Publication Manual:

The APA Publication Manual (latest edition) is the official style manual for the reflective research paper.

Format Requirements:

Paper: The final copy of all critical element papers must be printed on white 20 pound paper, for inclusion in your Professional Portfolio.

Printing: Only letter quality print is acceptable. Use Times New Roman 12 font for the text of your paper.

Proofreading: It is your responsibility to proofread your papers (or have a colleague do so) prior to submission to advisor/instructor. Proofreading should include grammar, syntax, tense, spelling, etc. If paper does not meet quality writing standards, advisor/instructor may require you to enroll in a writing class.

Style Requirements:

- No widows or orphans (no one sentence only) at the bottom or top of pages.
- Margins must be 1 ½ inches left, right, top and bottom.
- Title page must follow the arrangement specified on the sample page found on pages 10.
- The text of the paper must be double-spaced. Lengthy quotations (40 or more words) are to be a double spaced block of typewritten lines without quotation marks. Indent five to seven spaces or ½ inch from the left margin. See APA Publication Manual (latest edition).
- Do not use a table of contents or chapter designations.
- The use of quotations must follow the guidelines cited in the APA Manual. See section on the use of quotations.
- Reference citations in the text of the paper must follow the guidelines cited in the APA Publication Manual.
- The use of the reference list must follow the guidelines cited in the APA Publication Manual.
- Tables and figures should normally not be included in the text of an paper of this type.

Other Considerations:

- One of the most troublesome features of papers is tense consistency. Special attention must be paid to maintaining tense consistency, particularly when referring to the writings of others. Past tense should normally be used for both current and older citations.
- Variation in sentence structure and pattern makes any paper more interesting and readable. Avoid beginning sentences with it or there. Use the active voice.
- Normally, effective paragraph development requires that the paragraph contain more than one sentence. If one-sentence paragraphs are used, be sure they serve a specific and legitimate purpose.
- Since this is a reflective research paper, you can use “I” or the first person point of view in this paper.

Headings and Subheadings:

- When a heading is placed toward the bottom of a page, it must be followed by at least two typewritten lines.
- A heading placed toward the top of a page should either begin the page or be preceded by at least two typewritten lines.
- Do not use the heading – Introduction. Just start the paper with your introductory paragraphs. Headings used in the body of your paper should designate the topics discussed in that part of your paper. You can use the heading – Conclusion designating the final paragraphs of your paper.

- In papers of this length, two or three levels of headings will normally be sufficient. They should follow the sample model provided below.
- A first level heading should be centered and all important words should be capitalized (Example below).
- A second level heading should be flush with the left margin, *italicized* and all important words should be capitalized (Example follows).
- A third level heading should be indented 5 spaces, *italicized*, use only lowercase letters, and end the heading with a period (Example follows).

Examples for the Use of Headings:

- **If using two levels of headings:**

Heading

Procedure

- **If using three levels of headings:**

Heading

Method

participants.

My Philosophy of Educational Leadership

A Research Paper

Presented to

The Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling,
and Postsecondary Education
University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education/or Advanced Studies Certificate

by

Toobee R. Nottoobee

May 2006

(NOTE: Use MONTH of graduation.)

Advisor's Name

SAMPLE TITLE PAGE FOR THE CRITICAL ELEMENT

REFLECTIVE RESEARCH PAPER

CENTER TEXT BETWEEN MARGINS