



## **EDLR 5349: Curriculum & Instruction for School Improvement**

**Term:** Summer 2025

**Professor:** Dr. Jennifer Watters

**Office Phone:** 903-566-6334

**Email:** [jwatters@uttyler.edu](mailto:jwatters@uttyler.edu)

**Last Day to Withdraw:** July 10, 2025

**Office Hours:** Mondays, 10-11:30am; Tuesdays, 3-4:30pm (Zoom link on Canvas Home Page). By appointment also.

**Course Dates:** May 12-August 9, 2025

**Course Times:** Online

**Classroom:** Canvas

---

### **Course Overview**

This course offers a framework intended to help educational leaders (principals) recognize quality instructional and curricular practices that lead to school improvement and student success. The course will provide research-based-teaching methods, explains how to implement them at the campus and classroom levels, and shows what instructional transformation really looks like.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

**Texas Principal Standards:** [Access the Texas Principal Standards here](#)

*The student will be able to:*

- Understand the attributes of high-quality instructional practices to improve and restructure student learning (*Texas Principal Standard 1*)
- Understand the importance of aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment (*Texas Principal Standard 1*)
- Understand how to advocate for and sustain instructional programs conducive to student learning (*Texas Principal Standards 1, 3 & 4*)
- Learn how to coach teachers to promote organizational change and establish advanced learning organizations (*Texas Principal Standards 1, 2 & 3*)
- Apply leadership principles to inform strategic planning (*Texas Principal Standard 5*)

**National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards-Building Level:** [Access NELPs here](#)

#### ***Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Improvement***

Component 1.2 Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to lead improvement processes that include data use, design, implementation, and evaluation.

#### ***Standard 4: Learning and Instruction***

Component 4.4 Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to collaboratively evaluate,

develop, and implement the school's curriculum, instruction, technology, data systems, and assessment practices in a coherent, equitable, and systematic manner.

### ***Standard 7: Building Professional Capacity***

Component 7.2 Program completers understand and have the capacity to develop and engage staff in a collaborative professional culture designed to promote school improvement, teacher retention, and the success and well-being of each student and adult in the school.

Component 7.3 Program completers understand and have the capacity to personally engage in, as well as collaboratively engage school staff in, professional learning designed to promote reflection, cultural responsiveness, distributed leadership, digital literacy, school improvement, and student success.

## **Required Textbooks and Readings**

- APA Manual, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition. (program requirement)
- All course readings will be provided within each Canvas module as articles, book chapters, or free access to full texts from the library.
- We will utilize the Learning and Teaching chapter in *BreakThrough Principals* from your previous course as well, but with a different lens. If you do not have the text, you will be provided access.
- Total Estimated costs of required course materials: \$0

## **Course Structure**

This course is designed to support your leadership development in moving from theory to practice and place you in the driver's seat to critically assess and problem-solve approaches to school improvement, grounded in curriculum and instruction. In each module, you will read, engage in discussion with your Virtual Learning Community, apply your learning through a simulation activity (experiential learning), and work toward creating a responsive plan of action in school improvement.

**Reading:** Each module will be two-three weeks long. The first week of every module is intentionally designed for you to have time to read and reflect. This will set you up for moving from theory to practice, as we will use the reading to then move into an experiential learning activity.

**Virtual Learning Community:** Following your reading, we will engage in a discussion board during each module. This will be where you engage with your small group, AKA: your Virtual Learning Community. As an instructor, I strive to provide a differentiated approach to the boards, so it is not your typical "write a response and respond to two colleagues." Instead, you will asynchronously engage with your learning community to unpack and explore the implications of the reading on your C&I leadership identity. In alignment to taking the first week of the module to read, you will post your initial response by the second Tuesday of the module. For the learning community responses, I stagger the due dates within the discussion board forums to ensure equitable opportunity to engage meaningfully with all group members. The responses to your community will be due the following Sunday, providing the window of Wednesday-Sunday to respond. To more authentically connect with your community, you will be expected to engage using video posts. Please be sure to review the expectations for the respective board at the beginning of each module to plan your participation accordingly. Your timely participation in discussions is a substantial part of your grade in this course and late posts will result in a loss of credit.

**Simulation Activities:** As the last learning activity in each module, we will engage in experiential learning through a Simulation Activity. Simulation is designed to put you in the driver’s seat in a risk-free environment and facilitate moving from theory to practice in your learning. Some simulation activities will require you to collaborate with a small team at your campus, so you will be responsible for identifying participants and scheduling the collaborative focus to complete your activity. Other simulation activities may include scenario-based practice, immersion-centered activities, or virtual-based practice. Directions and supports will be provided within each module to prepare you for each simulation activity.

**The Leadership for School Improvement Leadership Pillar Project:** Through the course, we are exploring the concepts of leading instructional transformation and school improvement as a school leader. The Pillar Project is a tiered assignment that will scaffold through each module. Here, you will explore the strengths and challenges related to C&I at your current school and identify a priority area for improvement that you would address if placed in the driver’s seat as the school leader tomorrow. Your charge is to develop an action plan for your identified priority area. As the culminating simulation activity, you will submit a final product that reflects all of the items you have identified along the way within each module. The purpose is to model that thoughtful leadership examines multiple views to address improvement and considers all areas to facilitate systematic planning to ultimately develop sustainable systems and responsive supports.

**Check-in and Check-up:** Throughout the course, I incorporate some short, formative feedback opportunities, which I call “Check-In and Check-up.” This is an opportunity for me to support your learning and get feedback on how I may better meet your needs as an instructor. Think "monitor and adjust" like we do in the classroom with our PK-12 students, colleagues during professional learning, etc. Your success is my priority, so please do take the opportunity to share how I can support you better, or if all is good, then affirmations are welcome so I know to do more of the same.

## Course Module Focus

*Note: A full, detailed calendar is provided on the Home Page in Canvas. I also provide a Pacing Guide within each module to support time allocation and organization.*

### **Module 1: Getting Started with School Improvement**

*Reading: Jump-starting Instructional Transformation for Rapid School Improvement*  
Schedule Interviews: CIA Director, Principal, Instructional Coach/Lead Teacher

### **Module 2: Examining the Components of Leading CIA for Improvement**

*Reading: BreakThrough Principals, Learning and Teaching Chapter*  
Complete Interviews: CIA Director, Principal, Instructional Coach/Lead Teacher  
⇒ Item 1 for Leading School Improvement Pillar Project: Identify Priority

### **Module 3: Leading Curriculum, PLCs and Identifying Improvement Priorities**

*Reading: Starting a Movement: Building Culture from the Inside Out with PLCs, selected chapters*  
Simulation Activity: PLC and Critical Issues Assessments (will need a small campus team)  
⇒ Item 2 for Leading School Improvement Pillar Project: Identify PLC Needs

### **Module 4: Leading Assessment and Data Analysis**

*Reading: Leverage Leadership 2.0, Data-driven Instruction Chapter*  
Simulation Activity: Data-driven Assessment (will need a small campus team)  
⇒ Item 3 for Leading School Improvement Pillar Project: Identify Data Teaming Needs

### **Module 5: Leading Instruction for School Improvement**

*Reading: Get Better Faster: a 90 Day Plan for Coaching New Teachers, Coaching Principles Chapter*

Simulation Activity: Virtual Simulation (SchoolSims)

⇒ Item 4 for Leading School Improvement Pillar Project: Identify Leadership Needs

### **Module 6: Moving from Theory to Practice for School Improvement**

Leading School Improvement Pillar Project (Pulling it together to complete)

Final Exam

## **Tips for Success in this Course**

1. **Participate.** I invite you to engage deeply, ask questions, and talk about the course content with your learning community. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers, as you all have different perspectives you bring to the table through your educator experiences.
2. **Manage your time.** I get it—students usually juggle a lot, and I know you've got commitments beyond this class: work, life, family, personal time, etc. Still, doing your best in graduate school means carving out enough dedicated time for coursework. I provide a pacing guide for each module to help you balance your time effectively. I encourage you to use this as a resource to support the “here and now” with coursework, and then also to develop strategies to balance demands in the future as a school leader.
3. **Login regularly.** I recommend that you log in to Canvas several times a week to stay active with the course. I do use the announcement feature in lieu of sending out class emails to ensure you do not overlook or miss anything (emails can get buried sometimes!).
4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous class content. For example, what we will read in week one of each module will then move forward into application. If you feel you are starting to fall behind, check in with me as soon as possible so we can troubleshoot together.
5. **Use Canvas notification settings.** Pro tip! Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable notifications to be sent instantly or daily. ([Canvas Notification Guide](#))
6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me for support. Your success is my priority. I am available and happy to help.

## **Graded Course Requirements Information**

**Virtual Learning Community/Discussion Boards:** Described above. Points are awarded in alignment to stated direction in the module.

**Simulation Activities:** Following each Simulation Activity, you will engage in a written reflection for submission. Here, you will engage in exploring what you learned and how you will apply the learning in the future as a school leader. Points are awarded in alignment to stated direction in the module.

**The Pillar Project:** In addition to scaffolded learning activities through each module, your final project submission will consist of 1) a written Action Plan, and 2) a simulated (recorded) faculty meeting reviewing your plan. Points are awarded in alignment to the provided rubric.

**Final Exam:** The Final Exam consists of three, written essay-style responses where you will explore and reflect upon leadership learning take-aways regarding C&I for school improvement. Points are awarded in alignment to the provided rubric.

**Check-in and Check-up:** Described above. This is a participation grade.

## Grading Structure

Assignment	Percentage %
Discussion Board and Participation	25%
Simulation Activities/Reflections & Check-In/Check-up	25%
Pillar Project	25%
Final Exam	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Grading Scale

- A - (90% or higher)
- B - (80 - 89%)
- C - (70 - 79%)
- D - (60 - 69%)
- F - (Below 60%)

### Late Work and Make-Up Exams:

1. No late work is accepted unless prior arrangements have been made.
2. If an initial discussion board post is submitted after the due date, no points for that board will be awarded. Engaging in peer response will not earn partial credit.
3. If you have an emergency or life event, please reach out to me **prior to the due date** to make arrangements. I do understand unexpected events happen, and I am here to support you.

### University Policies & Student Resources:

University policies and student resources are available on the University website and in Canvas under "Syllabus".

- [University Policy](#)
- [Student Resources](#)

### Artificial Intelligence Statement:

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

**Within this course, AI or Generative-AI tools are not to be used for any submissions for discussion boards (virtual learning community), simulation activity reflections, the pillar project, nor the final exam.**

## Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates

Module Number and Description	Activities	Due
<p>Start Here Course Introduction May 12-18</p>	<p>Course and Professor Expectations</p> <p><b><i>You must complete these items to access Module 1</i></b></p>	<p>Intro Video: Sunday, May 18</p> <p>Course/Professor Expectations Acknowledgement: Sunday, May 18</p>
<p>Module 1: Getting Started with School Improvement through CIA  May 12-25</p>	<p>Watch: The Principal Story Read: <i>Jump-starting Instructional Transformation</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Submit:</u></b></p> <p>Simulation Activity: Elevator Speech Discussion Board: The Principal Story Reflection: Instructional Transformation</p>	<p><b>Elevator Speech:</b> Tues., May 20 <b>**Tuesday to give you a couple extra days.</b></p> <p><b><u>Discussion Board:</u></b> Initial: Tuesday, May 20 Response: Sunday, May 25</p> <p>Reflection: Sunday, May 25</p>
<p>Module 2: Examining the Components of Leading CIA for Improvement  May 26-June 8</p>	<p>Read: <i>BreakThrough Principals</i> Watch: <i>BreakThrough Principals</i> Video Simulation Immersion: CIA Director, Principal, IC</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Submit:</u></b></p> <p>Complete KWL Chart and Simulation Reflection (readings/video/interviews) Discussion Board</p>	<p>KWL Chart and Reflection: Sunday, June 8</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Board:</u></b> Responses- Sunday, June 8 <b><i>No Peer Responses this time</i></b></p>
<p>Module 3: Leading Curriculum and Identifying Improvement Targets  June 9-29</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Week 1: June 9-15</b></p> <p>Read: <i>Starting a Movement</i> Assemble Campus Team for Simulation Activity</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Week 2: June 16-22</b></p> <p>Discussion Board: <i>Starting a Movement</i> Watch: Curriculum Leadership 101 Lecture</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Week 3: June 23-29</b></p> <p>Submit Simulation Activity Reflection Check-in and Check-up</p> <p><b><i>Pillar Project Basket Item: Identify PLC Needs</i></b></p>	<p>Simulation Activity Reflection: Sunday, June 29</p> <p>Check-in and Check-up: Sunday, June 29</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Board:</u></b> Initial- Tuesday, June 17 Responses- Sunday, June 22</p>
<p>Module 4: Assessment and Data Teaming  June 30-July 13</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Week 1: June 30-July 6</b></p> <p>Read: <i>Leverage Leadership 2.0</i> Watch: <i>Leverage Leadership 2.0</i> Videos Assemble Campus Team for Simulation Activity</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Week 2: July 7-13</b></p> <p>Discussion Board: <i>Leverage Leadership</i> Submit Simulation Activity Reflection Check-in and Check-up</p>	<p>Simulation Activity Reflection: Sunday, July 13</p> <p>Check-in and Check-up Sunday, July 13</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Board:</u></b> Initial- Tuesday, July 8</p>

	<b><i>Pillar Project Basket Item: Identify DDDM Needs</i></b>	Responses- Sunday, July 13
<p>Module 5: Leading Instructional Improvement (Tier 1)  July 14-27</p>	<p><b>Week 1: July 14-20</b> Read: <i>Get Better Faster</i> Watch: <i>Get Better Faster</i> Videos Access to SchoolSims Virtual Simulation</p> <p><b>Week 2: July 21-27</b> Discussion Board: <i>Get Better Faster</i> Watch: Lecture on Supporting Teachers through Differentiated Coaching Approaches Submit Simulation Activity Reflection Check-in and Check-up</p> <p><b><i>Pillar Project Basket Item: Identify Leadership Development Needs</i></b></p>	<p>Simulation Activity Reflection: Sunday, July 27</p> <p>Check-in and Check-up Sunday, July 27</p> <p><b><u>Discussion Board:</u></b> Initial- Tuesday, July 22 Responses- Sunday, July 27</p>
<p>Module 6: Moving from Theory to Practice for School Improvement  July 28-August 8</p>	<p><b>Leading School Improvement Pillar Project</b> <i>Time to work on Pillar Project</i></p> <p><b><u>Reminder: The Pillar Project is scaffolded throughout the course:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simulation Activities will support data collection and 10,000 ft view of needs/move from theory to practice</li> <li>• Readings and Virtual Learning Community (Discussion Board) are designed to support your growth in CIA knowledge</li> </ul> <p><b>Final Exam</b></p>	<p>Pillar Project: Wednesday, August 6</p> <p>Final Exam Window: August 4-8</p>

## The UT Tyler College of Education and Psychology Mission and Vision

### CEP Mission

The mission of the CEP is to prepare competent and passionate professionals in the fields of education, psychology, and counseling; to advance knowledge and expertise; and to impact these fields locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally.

### CEP Vision

The CEP will be a global leader in responding to needs in the fields of education, psychology, and counseling, with a focus on the East Texas region, by creating innovative academic and scholarly pathways and partnerships.

Access the Texas Administrative Code for the [Educators' Code of Ethics and Standard Practices](#)