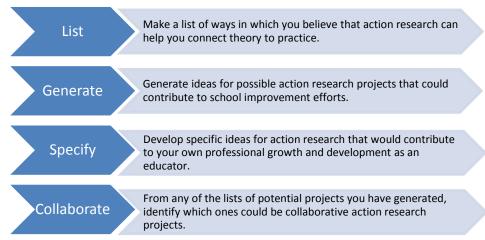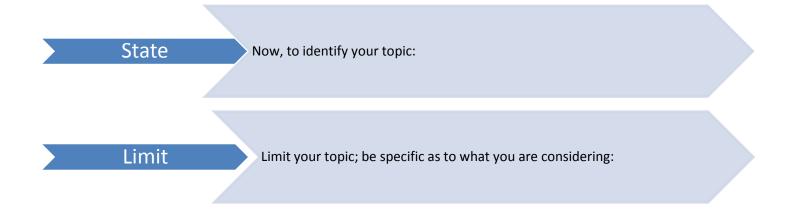# Step 1: Identifying and Limiting a Topic
TEMPLATE: Kick-start your thinking

Use the following template to guide thinking about possible areas of research.
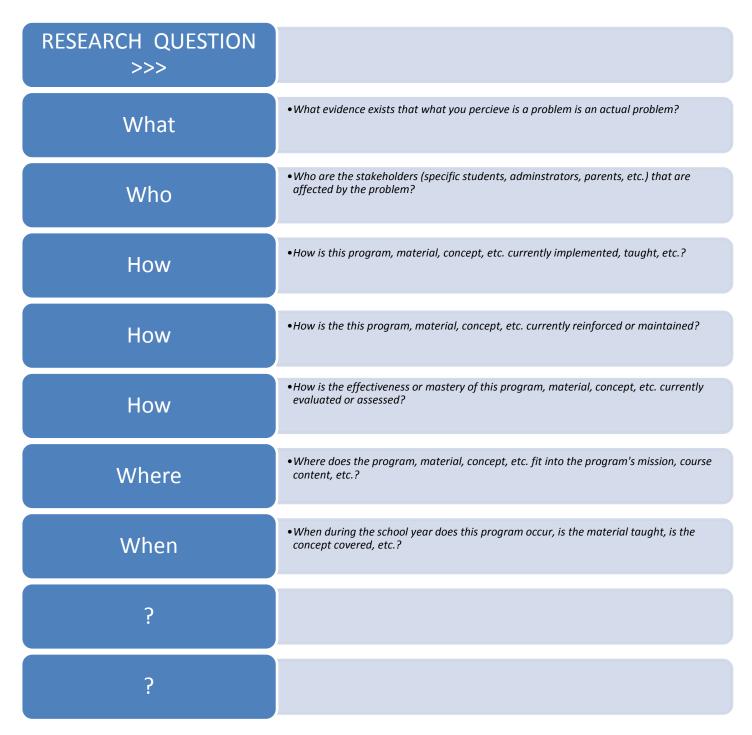
List — Make a list of ways in which you believe that action research can help you connect theory to practice.

Generate — Generate ideas for possible action research projects that could contribute to school improvement efforts.

Specify — Develop specific ideas for action research that would contribute to your own professional growth and development as an educator.

Collaborate — From any of the lists of potential projects you have generated, identify which ones could be collaborative action research projects.

Adapted from Mertler, C.A. (2014). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 30.

State — Now, to identify your topic:

Limit — Limit your topic; be specific as to what you are considering:

Adapted from Mertler, C.A. (2014). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 35.

Step 2: Gathering Information to Build Idea(s)
TEMPLATE: Probing the Research Question

Use the following template to guide thinking about specific aspects of your research question. The goal of the template is to clarify an area of focus for your research. If an item does not pertain to your question, skip it. Additional questions may be added to the end.

RESEARCH QUESTION >>>	
What	• What evidence exists that what you percieve is a problem is an actual problem?
Who	• Who are the stakeholders (specific students, adminstrators, parents, etc.) that are affected by the problem?
How	• How is this program, material, concept, etc. currently implemented, taught, etc.?
How	• How is the this program, material, concept, etc. currently reinforced or maintained?
How	• How is the effectiveness or mastery of this program, material, concept, etc. currently evaluated or assessed?
Where	• Where does the program, material, concept, etc. fit into the program's mission, course content, etc.?
When	• When during the school year does this program occur, is the material taught, is the concept covered, etc.?
?	
?	

Adapted from Mertler, C.A. (2014). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 60.

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Step 3: Reviewing Related Literature
TEMPLATE: Planning Your Action Research Literature Review

Use the following template to guide your for your literature review. Group/categorize your findings and incorporate your research for your topic.

Introduction

Describe your overall topic, why it is important, and why you are interested in it:

List any major themes, subtopics, or trends in research questions, methodologies, results, and/or conclusions:

Body

THEME A *(broad word or phrase that synthesizes a subset of your literature):*

-Overview of characteristics Theme A:

Subtopic 1 *(narrowly grouped findings related to theme):*

Study 1:

Study 2:

Study 3:

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Subtopic 2 *(narrowly grouped findings related to theme):*

Study 4:

Study 5:

Study 6:

Subtopic 3 *(narrowly grouped findings related to theme):*

Study 7:

Study 8:

Study 9:

…etc….

THEME B *(broad word or phrase that synthesizes a subset of your literature):*

-Overview of characteristics Theme B:

Subtopic 1 *(narrowly grouped findings related to theme):*

Study 1:

Study 2:

Study 3:

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Subtopic 2 *(narrowly grouped findings related to theme):*

Study 4:

Study 5:

Study 6:

Subtopic 3 *(narrowly grouped findings related to theme):*

Study 7:

Study 8:

Study 9:

…etc….

Continue addressing themes as appropriate for your overall research topic. You should discover the narrowing focus of the literature review as you progress through the themes and subtopics.

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Summary

Discuss the contributions of literature to the broader field of education (and/or a more specific field such as gifted education, ESL education, etc.):

Identify and discuss the pro/cons, strengths/weaknesses of this body of literature:

Discuss what is missing from this body of literature that will serve as a focus for your study/methodology:

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Step 4: Developing a Research Plan
TEMPLATE: Action Research Design Development

Use the following template to guide thinking as plot out your research design.

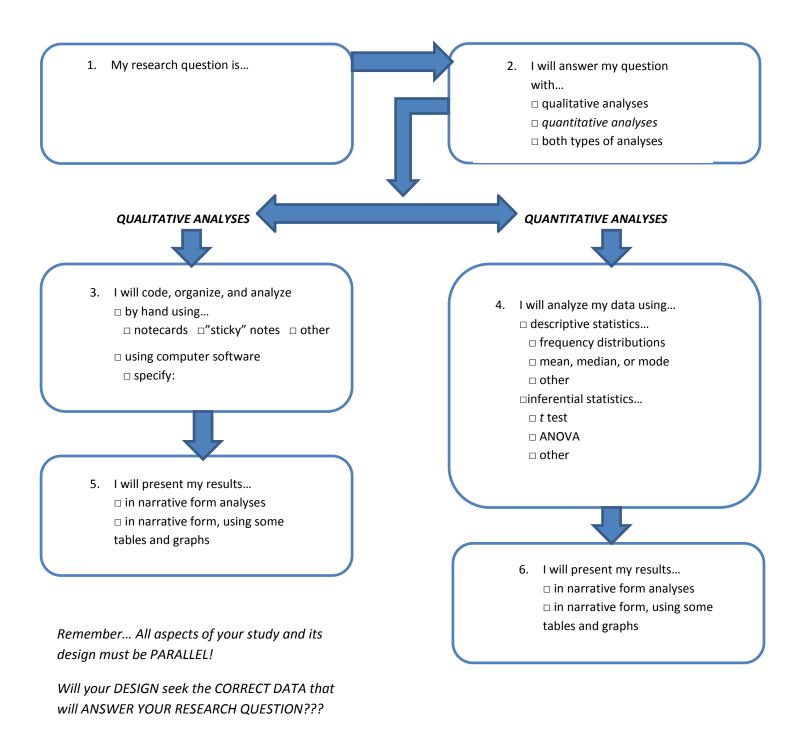|	
1. The topic I'm thinking of doing action research on is...	2. The purpose of my study is to...
3. My fundemental research question is...	4. The most appropriate type of data for me to collect is... ☐qualitative ☐quantitative ☐both (mixed-methods) *WHY?*
5. The specific form of data I will collect is...	6. Based on the preceding responses, my research design can best be described as...

Remember... All aspects of your study and its design must be PARALLEL! Will your DESIGN seek the CORRECT DATA that will ANSWER YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION???

Mertler, C.A. (2014). Appendix C of *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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Steps 5 & 6: Implementing the Plan, Collecting the Data, & Analyzing the Data
TEMPLATE: Planning for Data Collection

Use the following template as you plan for your approach for data analysis.

1. My research question is…

2. I will answer my question with…
   □ qualitative analyses
   □ *quantitative analyses*
   □ both types of analyses

QUALITATIVE ANALYSES

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSES

3. I will code, organize, and analyze
   □ by hand using…
      □ notecards □"sticky" notes □ other
   □ using computer software
      □ specify:

4. I will analyze my data using…
   □ descriptive statistics…
      □ frequency distributions
      □ mean, median, or mode
      □ other
   □inferential statistics…
      □ *t* test
      □ ANOVA
      □ other

5. I will present my results…
   □ in narrative form analyses
   □ in narrative form, using some tables and graphs

6. I will present my results…
   □ in narrative form analyses
   □ in narrative form, using some tables and graphs

Remember… All aspects of your study and its design must be PARALLEL!

Will your DESIGN seek the CORRECT DATA that will ANSWER YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION???

Mertler, C.A. (2014). Appendix C of *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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Step 7: Developing an Action Plan
TEMPLATE: Sample Steps to Action Chart

Use the following template to guide thinking about the action research cycle. Consider what revisions to make, what changes need to occur, or what improvements need to be made so that future actions are meaningful.

Summary of Research Questions and Findings	Recommended Actions	Who is Responsible? T = Teacher(s) S = Students P = Principal PA = Parent(s) O = Other	Who needs to Be Consulted?	Who Will Collect Data?	Time Line	Necessary Resources

Adapted from Mills, 2011 and Mertler, C.A. (2014). *Action research: Improving schools and empowering educators.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 212.

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Step 8: Writing an Action Research Report
TEMPLATE A: Research Report

Introduction

- Research Question(s)
- School/District/Program Context
- Research Overview
  - the topic and/or inspiration for the research
  - related research by other researchers (what was found in the literature pertinent to your topic

Methodology

- Description of methodology(ies) that you followed
- Data analysis tool(s)
- Collection methods

Results

- State key findings
- Discussion of the impact of findings on the students, staff, and or school/district/program

Conclusion

- State how the original research question(s) relates to the actual finding(s)
- Plans for further implementation in the school/district/program context
- Implications for the next research cycle

Adapted from State of New South Whales, Department of Education and Training. (2007). *Professional learning and leadership development: Action research abstracts.* Retrieved from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/proflearn/research/abs2.htm

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