Plan B Option – Topical Paper

This option is designed for Master’s students who wish to learn about an educational practice, phenomena, or policy. The topic selected should be one that is relevant for current special education teaching practices, policy development, collaboration, or other topics that positively contribute to enhancing student learning and development and/or instructional development. Topical papers must be well grounded in current research, and reach conclusions or make recommendations based on critical thinking and analysis. The paper must be logical and well constructed, have correct grammar and punctuation, and follow all APA guidelines. If the committee does not believe the paper meets expectations, the student may be asked to rewrite sections of or the entire paper.

**See Plan B Topical Paper Scoring Guide/Rubric**

Scoring Guide/Rubric for Plan B Topical Paper

The following scoring guide is used to evaluate the quality of the paper.

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| **Component** | **Below Expectations**(0 pt/component) | **Meets Expectations**(1 pt/component) | **Exceeds Expectations** (2 pts/component) |
| Introduction: Identification of Topic/Concern | No specific mention of topic/concern. Topic/Concern not relevant to literature cited. Topic/Concern not supported by introduction. Topic/Concern is vague or ambiguous. | Topic/Concern specifically identified. Topic/Concern has educational relevance. Topic/Concern related to information presented in introduction. | Thoughtful analysis of how topic/concern impacts education/learing/development. Persuasive justification as to how paper will address topic/concern. |
| Literature Review | No literature review provided. Literature cited no relevant to topic. Insufficient number of citations (less than 15). Misunderstanding of literature cited. | Literature review relevant to topic/concern. Adequate literature review provided (15+ references). Correct understanding of literature reviewed. | Extensive literature review provided. Clear and full understanding of references cited. Topic/Concern well supported in research. |
| Purpose Statement | No purpose statement provided. Purpose not relevant to topic/concern. Purpose not relevant to literature cited in introduction. Purpose is vague or ambiguous. | Purpose statement is related to topic/concern identified and states what paper will address. | Purpose statement indicates and expands upon how paper addresses the issues/concerns identified in the research review. Purpose statement clearly states the major themes discussed in the paper. |
| Description of Methods | Failure to describe search procedure, how information will be organized, or reported. | Satisfactory description of search procedure and organizational scheme for paper. | Full description of the search procedure. Full description of the organizational scheme. Full description of how information will be analyzed and reported. |
| Description of Findings | Failure to report pertinent information about topic. Lack of understanding of reported information. Reporting of information not consistent with organization scheme of paper. Reporting of information not consistent with purpose of paper. | Adequate, correct description of topical information. No conclusions presented. Information follows organizational scheme. Information consistent with purpose. | Comprehensive and thorough reporting of information provided. |
| Discussion | No discussion of implications of information reported. Lack of logical organization. | Satisfactory summary of findings presented. Implications of findings for effective instruction or professional development not provided. | Comprehensive summary of findings presented. Implications of findings for effective instruction, policy, and/or professional development thoughtfully and extensively discussed. Discussion of limitations in current knowledge base and areas for future research provided. |
| APA | References (citations and References section), format of paper, tables and/or figures, and supporting evidence do not follow APA guidelines. | Most sections (i.e. approximately 80 percent) follow APA guidelines. | All sections and subsections of paper follow APA guidelines. |
| Writing Mechanics | Two or more spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. | One spelling, punctuation, or grammatical error. | No spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. |

Each component of the thesis will be graded based on the rubric described above. Proficiency will be determined as follows:

**Exceeds expectations:** 14-16 points

**Meets expectations:** 12-13 points

**Below expectations:** 11 points or below