The Master of Professional Education Program in Educational Leadership aims to develop the capacities of graduate students who are active professionals in educational and academic communities. Involvement in this professional graduate education program contributes to becoming a critical scholar practitioner. In addition to participating in graduate seminars addressing pertinent theory and research, candidates critically analyze problems and challenges facing educational leaders drawn from their practical experience. The program culminates with a capstone project addressing a professional problem related to educational leadership through collaborative and independent research.

The MPEd in Educational Leadership Capstone is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their mastery of the knowledge, theory and skills gained in the program. The capstone involves:
- identifying and describing a professional problem in an educational setting;
- critically integrating professional knowledge with leadership theory;
- synthesizing academic and gray literature, including policy;
- analyzing the implications for decolonization, equity, diversity and inclusion (D-EDI) as they relate to the professional problem and context; and
- articulating recommendations for leadership theory and practices in addressing a professional problem, along with a critical discussion of the limitations of the recommendations.

Students choose the type of project they would like to complete for their capstone, and all capstones will involve both an individual paper and a presentation to showcase their culminating work in this program. As a comprehensive evaluation of their understanding, the capstone project highlights students' abilities to understand a professional problem and effectively communicate recommendations for resolving challenges confronted in educational leadership.

Requirements for the Capstone:

- The capstone entails both a paper and a presentation assignment in the final course of the program, ED 9436 Finding, Framing and Solving Problems in Professional Practice. These assignments are evaluated by the course instructor.
- Each capstone paper should be 35 – 40 pages (double-spaced), excluding references, and conform to APA 7th edition citation guidelines. Further expectations for the paper and presentation will be determined by the course instructor, and communicated to students.
- Minor scaffolding assignments support collaborative learning to prepare for the final capstone. Both collaborative and independent work are featured in the course.
- Each student must submit their own unique paper and presentation for evaluation.
- Students are expected to engage with reading material from their courses and to conduct additional scholarly research with academic literatures.
- Students will build upon ideas from their previous course papers, but each capstone should be a new contribution from the student.

Capstone Format

Students choose from the following projects for their capstone.

1. **Literature Review:** A literature review project in educational leadership focuses on a specific topic or issue related to education, such as leadership succession planning, policy design for a school board priority, or supervision of educational staff. The project requires the practitioner researcher to synthesize and critically analyze the literature, identifying gaps and limitations in current knowledge. The paper must include an overview of the method for searching and reviewing the literature, including inclusion and exclusion criteria. Additionally, the literature review involves the development of recommendations for future research, policy, and/or practice based on the findings of the literature review, as well as a critical discussion about the considerations for D-EDI from the review.

2. **Critical Policy Analysis:** A critical policy analysis involves an in-depth analysis of a specific education policy or set of policies. The project requires the practitioner researcher to examine the policy's goals, objectives, and underlying assumptions, as well as its intended and unintended effects on stakeholders and the broader educational community. To do so, the analysis includes synthesis of contemporary and historical literature about the policy issue. The project also involves an assessment of policy's implementation (suggested plan for implementation) and its impact on D-EDI commitments and access for relevant individuals and communities. The researcher uses a critical lens to analyze the policy, questioning assumptions and values that underpin the policy and identifying alternative approaches that may be more effective. The project also involves the development of recommendations for policy reform or revision based on the findings of the analysis. Student may choose to include the creation of a policy brief that translates the academic paper to professional knowledge for practitioners.

3. **Policy Development:** A policy development project in educational leadership involves the creation of a new education policy or the revision of an existing policy. The project requires the practitioner researcher to identify a specific issue or problem in education that the policy aims to address, and to develop a policy proposal that is evidence-based, feasible, and aligned with the goals and values of the broader educational system. The policy development project involves conducting research about the problem through a review of academic and gray literature, and an analyzing the literature to inform the development of the policy. The practitioner researcher is encouraged to engage with stakeholders and experts in the field to gather feedback and refine the policy proposal. Finally, potential implementation challenges and resource implications of the policy are identified, including considerations for D-EDI, along with an articulated plan for evaluating policy impact.

4. **Critical Reflection on Educational Leadership:** A critical reflection involves identifying and analyzing one or two problems related to educational leadership practice in relation to contemporary educational leadership theories and research literature. The practitioner researcher also reflects on how their thinking on the problem/s has changed and developed through their engagement with course materials, and how such professional growth in this area has led to improved policy or practice. Practitioner researchers are encouraged to consider these improvements particularly in relation to D-EDI considerations. Additionally, the potential impact of these changes on educational community members and partners are articulated. The reflections are synthesized and nuanced to form a coherent argument for the practitioner researcher's educational leadership practices can further be nurtured, especially in relation to current research and theoretical perspectives. Examples of changed practices and opportunities for future growth are helpful in making this argument.

Graduate Degree-Level Expectations and Learning Outcomes

The capstone takes place during the final course in the MPEd Educational Leadership program. The capstone is aligned with the expectations and learning outcomes of the course.

ED 9436L Finding, Framing, and Solving Problems in Professional Practice (2 semesters)
Year 2 Summer - Intersession
Year 2 Summer - Summer Session

A culminating course in which candidates work together on framing, analyzing, and responding to problems and challenges they encounter in their leadership practice.

Graduate Degree-Level Expectations	Learning Outcomes
1. Depth & Breadth of Knowledge	• Find, understand, critique, and evaluate literature that supports inquiry into a problem of professional practice and the development of a capstone project; • Contribute to the development of a learning community that treats all ideas as improvable and demonstrates a willingness to share and build knowledge together;
2. Research & Scholarship	• Contribute an individual project to a multimodal showcase of paper and presentation assignments as a response to a problem of professional practice;
3. Application of Knowledge	• Read, synthesize, interrogate, and respond to a range of texts on leadership and leader-driven inquiry, and share their theoretically informed perspectives through class or community discussions;
4. Communication Skills	• Communicate understanding of a problem of professional practice by connecting personal experience with the leadership literature in ways that problematize current practices and theories, and also offer an alternative perspective as a response;
5. Awareness of the Limitations of Knowledge	• Use critical reflection as a tool for finding and framing problems of professional practice;
6. Autonomy & Professional Capacity	• Work collaboratively with others in the combined cohort by offering ideas and feedback, sharing resources, and assuming the role of "critical friend" to review and support the work of colleagues.