This lecture will outline how to begin your project.
The first assignment for your thesis project is to turn in the topic approval paper. This paper enables your instructor to give you feedback on your topic to make sure you are on the right track and have chosen a topic that will work for this project.
The first step is to pick your topic. To pick you topic it can be helpful to peruse past course materials. Look through old course syllabi, readings, the LETRS manuals and think about topics that really interested you. Were there things from your program that you wish you had more information about? It should be a topic connected to reading instruction but it could be loosely connected to reading (impact of retention, how to increase family involvement) or directly connected to reading achievement (effective vocabulary instruction for primary students; increasing oral language skills). Once you have an idea (or two) do some preliminary searches and see what you find. Read a few articles to make sure this is really what you want to spend the next few months reading and writing about. If you need help, check-in with your instructor. They can help refine your idea and make sure it will work for this paper.
You are going to begin the paper by working on the heart of the paper, Chapter 2—the literature review. The big work of Chapter 2 is finding your research articles—the articles that you will review in chapter 2. To do this you will engage in a number of database searches using ERIC. The lecture and supporting materials after this lecture provide information about how to do strong searches. To fully investigate your topic you will need to do searches by title, subject, key words, etc. You will also want to explore databases beyond ERIC. If you are doing a topic, such as family involvement, you may want to explore databases outside of education, such psych info. A research librarian at MSJ can be very helpful if you are having trouble. Be sure to take advantage of the resources available through the library (see next lecture for more information). In order to write your topic approval paper you will need to begin your database searches as the goal for the approval paper is to have 5 articles that will be used in your paper.
Research Articles—What Am I Looking For?

- Between 12-20 research articles to include in Chapter 2
- Peer-Reviewed Journals
- Research Studies
  - Implemented something and measured the results
  - Outline their population
  - Assessments
  - Research Design

You are looking for between 12-20 research articles to include in Chapter 2. The articles need to come from peer-reviewed journals and preference is given to articles published recently (last 10 years). These are the articles that will be displayed in your Chapter 2 table and that you will spend Chapter 2 discussing. You are looking for articles where there was a study conducted. The researches implemented something and then measured the results. In the article the student population is described, (e.g. 40 2nd grade students participated in the study. 20 students were in the new reading program and 20 students, control group, remained in the general reading program); assessments were done (e.g. the WJ was given to all 40 children at the start of the study and at the end of study); and a research design used to analyze the results.
Once you have done some searches, feel satisfied that this is the topic that you would like to focus on, and have found and read 5 articles, it is time to write your topic approval paper. The purpose of this assignment is to get your topic approved by your instructor. It is a chance of your instructor to make sure this is a strong topic for the assignment and to provide guidance. This assignment is a one page paper stating your topic (brief paragraph) and a rough outline of your paper (rough outline each chapter). Include at least 5 references on a separate reference page. See topic approval outline template for guidance.
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