

Frequently Asked Questions about the Capstone , Educ 461

1. What **IS** the capstone?

The capstone is a culminating experience that takes place at the end of this course, providing you with an opportunity to apply theory within an actual classroom. The capstone is designed to extend the learning process via actual implementation, assessment, and reflection. The capstone was developed in response to former student teachers' feedback that they needed more practice time prior to student teaching to build confidence and teaching skills.

2. **Where** does the capstone take place?

You select a mentor teacher. The mentor teacher may be a former teacher, a teacher in your home school district, or someone local. The research indicates that a self-selected mentor will be more effective for your learning than one assigned to you. See your instructor if mentor selection is problematic. The capstone experience takes place in the mentor teacher's classroom.

3. **Who** may be a mentor teacher?

Any certified teacher in a private or public school may serve as mentor.

4. How **long** is the capstone?

The capstone is designed to be a consecutive three day experience; this configuration provides you with the opportunity to modify lesson plans based on time constraints and students needs.

5. **When** do I do the capstone?

Ideally, the capstone will be done right after the course ends (during Christmas break for first semester students and during May for second semester students). It will be to your advantage to wait until the all of the course has been taught. However, if these times do not work for you, you may use breaks as the time for the capstone. See your instructor if the timing is problematic.

6. **What subjects** are taught?

You may teach the topic of your choice within the language arts/reading block; however, it is expected that you will include the multiple literacies discussed in class within your capstone unit.

7. **How** is the subject taught?

It is important to contact the mentor to determine whether:

a. you may teach any topic/unit that you desire

OR

b. you need to teach the content normally taught at that time in the school year

AND

c. you may teach using alternative texts or whether you need to use the basal.

If you are allowed to teach any topic you desire, develop a unit of your choice that incorporates multiple literacies within the language arts block. If you need to teach the content normally taught at that time in the school year, ask the mentor teacher whether you have the flexibility of teaching a unit plan or if you are required to use the basal. If you are allowed to teach a unit, use the Understanding by Design unit that is developed during the course of Educ 461. If you are not allowed to teach a unit of your own design, use the basal modifications you have learned in Educ 461 to “bring the basal to life”.

8. When do I construct the **lesson plans** for this teaching experience?

*The capstone preparation is not in addition to your regular assignments; it **is** your regular assignment! Your instructor will assist you in developing appropriate lesson plans throughout the semester. For example, once the vocabulary unit has been taught, you will then develop a vocabulary lesson plan for your capstone experience. In this way, your learning is purposeful and authentic. You will be teaching specific students rather than preparing a lesson plan for hypothetical students. Your instructor will review your plans prior to the capstone and provide you with “coach’s” comments.*

9. How will the capstone be **evaluated**?

*The lesson plans will be evaluated prior to the ending of the course. The capstone was designed to be a non-threatening, supportive way for you to grow prior to student teaching. Your grade is not impacted by the actual teaching of the capstone. **However, if for some reason you do not do the capstone, you will not have sufficient field experience hours to allow you to student teach. Your grade for the course will be finalized when you submit all materials to the field experience office.***

During the capstone, you need to write anecdotal notes on your lesson plans and video-tape yourself during one lesson.

After the capstone, you will fill out the reflection questionnaire supplied by your instructor; include insights derived from self-evaluation of the video taped lesson plan. Include a log of your hours. Your mentor teacher also needs to complete an evaluation and send it to Concordia.

10. What will the capstone **unit plan** consist of?

It is impossible to prescribe one template for all experiences due to the unique characteristics of each context. However, most of the components listed below should be included:

- *Theme or title of unit*
- *Grade level*
- *Background information about students*
- *Name of mentor teacher*
- *The “Big Ideas” of the unit*
- *Assessment of prior knowledge*
- *The “Hook”, initiating activity*
- *At least 3 lesson plans that include a goal, objectives, materials, procedure (with time allotments), assessment, assignment, reflection, and accommodations for learning different students*
- *Before, during, and after reading comprehension strategies*
- *Introduction, teaching, reinforcement, and assessment of vocabulary*
- *Evidence of methods designed to foster student participation and engagement*
- *Culminating activity*
- *Variety of texts or teaching materials*
- *Use of technology*
- *Informal or formal assessment*
- *Connections to literature and the language arts*
- *List of resources*