
Design

Self-study could be seen as a way of “keeping it real.” The “it” is the relationship between theory and practice. It keeps this relationship real by recognizing and formalizing the way we influence our practice. Doing so enables us to change because knowing our intents and beliefs opens us to others’ perspectives and actions.

—Mary Jane McIlwain (2007),
Reading Specialist, Fairfax County Public Schools, Virginia

In this chapter, you will find a space for building a strong research design for your research project. A discussion is provided on the importance of having a design before you begin conducting your research while also appreciating the hermeneutic quality of self-study research. There are opportunities for thinking about your research question, guidelines for creating a critical friend team, ideas for observing your classroom, suggestions for articulating your rationale, advice for developing a literature review, and strategies for conceptually mapping the research you locate. This chapter has a great deal of information that is presented in sections. It is suggested that you read it in chunks as you begin to develop and enact your research project.

◆ Reading this chapter will provide an opportunity for you to acquire the tools you need for designing your self-study teacher research project.

As a Vygotskian researcher, I purposely designed collaborative learning experiences to guide preservice teachers as they construct their personal understandings about their teaching. I wanted to create a classroom aura that prompts students to work at the rough edges of their competence and understanding. I envisioned an environment of cognitive dissonance in which students’ notions of teaching are challenged by moral and intellectual discussions with peers, cooperating teachers, and professors, and where students are permitted to make and share their mistakes.