

## **Curriculum & Structure**

### **Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership**

Sul Ross State University

#### **Program Overview**

The Ed.D. in Educational Leadership is a **60-credit-hour program** completed over three years (nine semesters). All courses are 3 credit hours each. The program is designed for working professionals and delivered fully online with weekly 90-minute synchronous sessions.

**Total Credits:** 60 semester hours

**Duration:** 3 years (9 semesters)

**Delivery:** Fully online with weekly synchronous sessions

**Cohort Model:** Students progress together through the entire program

#### **Three-Year Program Arc**

The curriculum is organized into three distinct phases:

##### **Phase I: Framing and Grounding (Semesters 1-3)**

Students identify and validate their Problem of Practice through improvement science tools, organizational analysis, and stakeholder engagement.

##### **Phase II: Designing for Improvement (Semesters 4-6)**

Students develop their Theory of Improvement grounded in scholarly literature, design rigorous methodology, and prepare for implementation.

##### **Phase III: Leading, Learning, and Integrating (Semesters 7-9)**

Students implement their improvement initiative, analyze data, and complete their Dissertation in Practice.

## **Year 1: Framing and Grounding**

### **Semester 1 (6 credits)**

#### **EDUA 8321 - The Science of Change and Improvement (3 credits)**

Introduction to improvement science epistemology, principles, and foundational tools including system mapping, root cause analysis, and measurement for improvement.

#### **EDUA 8301 - Trends in Rural and Borderland Community Contexts (3 credits)**

Examination of rural and borderland educational settings, focusing on place-based leadership, community context, and asset-based approaches.

**Semester Focus:** Define preliminary Problem of Practice; develop context and positionality narratives

### **Semester 2 (6 credits)**

#### **EDUA 8330 - Understanding Research Design (3 credits)**

Introduction to research paradigms, inquiry question development, and systematic literature engagement.

#### **EDUA 8302 - External Partnerships in Rural and Borderland Communities (3 credits)**

Partnership models, stakeholder mapping, and ethical collaboration in rural and borderland contexts.

**Semester Focus:** Engage scholarly literature; refine inquiry questions; map partnerships

### **Semester 3 (6 credits)**

#### **EDUA 8331 - Lab: Examining Problems of Practice (3 credits)**

Lab-based intensive Problem of Practice development with validation inquiry, driver diagram construction, and preliminary measurement systems.

#### **EDUA 8309 - Organizational Theory (3 credits)**

Organizational analysis through multiple theoretical frameworks including structural, political, cultural, and systems perspectives.

**Semester Focus:** Validate Problem of Practice; prepare for checkpoint defense

## **Milestone: Problem of Practice Checkpoint**

### **Year 2: Designing for Improvement**

#### **Semester 4 (6 credits)**

##### **EDUA 8332 - Lab: Scholarly Literature (3 credits)**

Lab-based intensive literature review development with focus on synthesis, critical analysis, and scholarly writing.

##### **EDUA 8320 - Strategic Planning and Evaluation (3 credits)**

Strategic planning frameworks, logic models, program evaluation, and measurement systems for improvement.

**Semester Focus:** Complete Literature Review chapter; develop Theory of Improvement

#### **Milestone: Literature Review Checkpoint**

#### **Semester 5 (9 credits)**

##### **EDUA 8304 - Philosophy and Ethics in Practice (3 credits)**

Ethical frameworks applied to educational leadership with emphasis on moral responsibility in leading change.

##### **EDUA 8303 - Change Management and Systems Thinking (3 credits)**

Systems thinking tools and change management theories for sustainable organizational improvement.

##### **EDUA 7322 - School Finance and Resource Management (3 credits) [*Specialization*]**

School finance systems, budgeting, resource allocation, and fiscal sustainability in rural and borderland contexts.

**Semester Focus:** Justify intervention design ethically, systemically, and fiscally; develop implementation plan

## **Semester 6 (9 credits)**

### **EDUA 8333 - Lab: Methods and Synthesis (3 credits)**

Lab-based intensive methodology development including research design, data collection instruments, and analysis procedures.

### **EDUA 8314 - Communication Strategies and Information Dissemination (3 credits)**

Data communication, visualization, and stakeholder engagement strategies for educational leaders.

### **EDUA 7321 - School Law, Policy, and Board Relations (3 credits) [*Specialization*]**

School law, policy frameworks, governance, and compliance requirements for practitioner research.

**Semester Focus:** Complete Methodology chapter; design SIAR cycles; prepare for implementation

**Milestone: Methodology Checkpoint**

## **Year 3: Leading, Learning, and Integrating**

## **Semester 7 (6 credits)**

### **EDUA 8313 - Human Resource Management (3 credits)**

Leading people through organizational change including professional development, coaching, and capacity building.

### **EDUA 7306 - Superintendent Leadership in Curriculum and Instruction (3 credits)**

*[Specialization]*

Instructional leadership, curriculum oversight, and connecting improvement efforts to teaching and learning.

**Semester Focus:** Implement improvement initiative; document leadership learning

## **Semester 8 (6 credits)**

### **EDUA 8360 - Dissertation I (3 credits)**

Dissertation seminar supporting comprehensive data analysis and Results chapter development.

**EDUA 7308 - Superintendency: Public and Community Relations (3 credits) [Specialization]**  
Public relations, media communication, stakeholder engagement, and communicating data to public audiences.

**Semester Focus:** Complete data analysis; write Results chapter

**Milestone: Results of SIAR Cycles Milestone**

**Semester 9 (6 credits)**

**EDUA 8361 - Dissertation II (3 credits)**

Dissertation completion seminar for Discussion and Implications chapter, final integration, and defense preparation.

**EDUA 7311 - Superintendent Practicum (3 credits) [Specialization]**

Practicum translating improvement learning into ongoing leadership practice with focus on sustainability.

**Semester Focus:** Complete Dissertation in Practice; prepare for defense

**Milestone: DiP Completion and Defense**

**Dissertation in Practice Milestones**

The program includes five major milestones marking critical checkpoints in DiP development:

**Problem of Practice Checkpoint (End of Semester 3)**

Students present refined Problem of Practice with supporting evidence, driver diagram, and preliminary measurement thinking.

**Literature Review Checkpoint (End of Semester 4)**

Students submit complete Literature Review chapter demonstrating synthesis of scholarly literature and connection to improvement aims.

**Methodology Checkpoint (End of Semester 6)**

Students submit complete Methodology chapter with SIAR cycle designs, data collection instruments, and ethical protocols.

### **Results of SIAR Cycles Checkpoint (End of Semester 8)**

Students present evidence of implementation and sufficient analyzed data for Results chapter.

### **DiP Completion and Defense (End of Semester 9)**

Students submit complete Dissertation in Practice and defend before their committee.

### **Superintendent and District-Level Leadership Specialization**

The 15-credit-hour specialization prepares students for superintendent and district-level leadership roles through five courses integrated across Years 2 and 3:

- EDUA 7322 - School Finance and Resource Management (Semester 5)
- EDUA 7321 - School Law, Policy, and Board Relations (Semester 6)
- EDUA 7306 - Superintendent Leadership in Curriculum and Instruction (Semester 7)
- EDUA 7308 - Superintendency: Public and Community Relations (Semester 8)
- EDUA 7311 - Superintendent Practicum (Semester 9)

Future specializations in healthcare leadership and nonprofit leadership will follow this same 15-credit structure with specialized courses replacing the superintendent sequence.

### **Integrated Course Design**

Courses within each semester are paired intentionally to work together toward shared learning objectives. Students develop sophisticated thinking by examining the same problem from multiple perspectives simultaneously. Weekly 90-minute synchronous sessions bring all courses together, where faculty model doctoral-level thinking and students practice with structured support.

This integrated design ensures students experience coherence across courses rather than fragmentation, building toward milestone readiness through coordinated faculty guidance.

### **Continuous Enrollment**

#### **EDUA 8160 - Dissertation Continuation (1 credit)**

This course provides continuous enrollment for students who need additional time to meet a

checkpoint standard during a semester when the related course is not offered. Students work with their advisor to produce evidence of meeting checkpoint requirements.

*Sul Ross State University*  
*The Frontier University of Texas*