

**Northeastern Illinois University
Nontraditional Degree Programs
University Without Walls**



SEMESTER REPORT

Fall 2016

Student Signature

Community Advisor Name

Community Advisor Signature

Academic Advisor Name

Academic Advisor Signature

Depth Area: Urban Ethnic Studies

SECTION I: Indicate where you stand in regards to the university requirements for graduation:

<input type="checkbox"/> Math: 090 completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Math: 092 completed
<input type="checkbox"/> Math: 091 completed	<input type="checkbox"/> College-level Math completed
<input type="checkbox"/> WIP completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Human Relations completed

SECTION II:

- Indicate total hours of traditional courses and Independent Study taken during the semester

Total Hours of Traditional Courses: 0
Total Hours of Independent Study: 12

List Depth Area Work:

- Studied the impacts of the Eurocentric educational curriculum and standards on students of color in the elementary/middle school settings.
- Research African-American homeschool curriculums and compare and contrast to traditional homeschool curriculums and Common Core at the Middle School level.
- Annotated Bibliography on The Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire
- Document my experiences starting the part-time homeschooling process with my 12-year-old son. Drafted Application for Institutional Review Board to conduct interviews with Middle School aged subjects, regarding race/ethnicity.

List Breadth Area Work in Behavioral Science:

- Annotated Bibliography on Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome by Dr Joy DeGruy

List Breadth Area Work in Natural Science:

- Developed a Home Garden Plan with my 12-year-old son as a part of our homeschool.

List Breadth Area Work in Humanities:

- Annotated Bibliography on Creative Schools: The Grassroots Revolution that's Transforming Education by Ken Robinson

List Breadth Area Work in Interdisciplinary/Professional Studies:

- Incorporated Global Studies and Justice Studies into my homeschool curriculum, using the U.S. Presidential election, current events in the justice system, and historical data to present relevant information in a manner digestible to a Middle School aged child.

List Effective Communication Work:

- Made a presentation to the Principal of my local Middle School, to gain permission to conduct interviews, upon approval from IRB, with students in the school. This is not a

privilege normally afforded to non-employees of the district. Information had to be submitted first in writing, and then an in-person meeting took place.

SECTION III:

In two typed pages, please reflect on what you learned in your depth, breadth, and effective communication areas during the semester and connect each area with the competency you gained. Include documents that support this new learning when submitting your Semester Report via email.

I entered this semester with a broad focus on what I deemed the components of "Urban Ethnic Studies." My intense passion for addressing the societal issues that impact black people in America, played a huge role in my depth area selection. I yearn to have a positive effect on education, the criminal justice system, the black family, and how we see ourselves and each other, at our core. This is a tremendous undertaking. I recognized very early on, that I would have to find practical and tangible ways to address these issues at a base level, in order to have a chance at being truly effective.

Humanities - I started with some readings that I believed would bring more specific direction to my goals. *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Dr Joy DeGruy, offered some perspective and insight into why many things are as they are in the black community. This book helps remove some of the judgement and guilt that so often surrounds our perceptions. Dr DeGruy also sheds light on the many strengths we possess as a people, that are devalued, ignored or suppressed in this society. This helped a great deal in the approach I have taken as a new homeschool parent.

Education - Next I read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire. This book was pure confirmation. For every idea I had about education, learning, literacy, and even how we view intelligence, this book supported my ideals, and challenged me to think them through even further. This pushed me in my approach as a homeschool parent to not approach education from a position of authority, but to empower my son in his approach to learning. I have found great success in this approach. (See attached annotations)

Education & Law - Developing a homeschool plan for my son came from a great deal of research, hands on work, and trial and error. I went to great lengths to research existing African-American homeschool programs, as well as more general/conventional ones. I met with numerous homeschool parents, who have been homeschooling for various amounts of time. Ultimately, I decided that none of these things in their current form, would be effective for our homeschool. I opted to take pieces from numerous sources, guided by Naasir's specific learning

style, goals, interests, and motivations, and created our own format. We have read, discussed and written about topics from the Presidential election, to the law and criminal justice, to the Constitution. Seeing him grasp these concepts and engage so deeply, has been its own reward. (See attached outline)

As Naasir and I navigated out part-time homeschooling program, we also faced challenges contending with the requirements, shortcomings, and timeline of his public school courses. No concepts seemed to be taught in a thorough, useable and memorable manner. Naasir and I found ourselves taking the content offered in school, and digging much deeper on our own. This created a level of frustration during the three and a half hours he spends at school each day. He often came home with more complaints than successes. This also served as confirmation of my prior issues with the public education system. Thankfully, we are able to channel our frustrations into empowering actions.

Behavioral Sciences - I have seen a child who teachers, and school specialists attempted to label as autistic and learning disabled, reading and analyzing text from The Autobiography of Malcolm X, and James Baldwin. I have watched as his social consciousness has elevated, and he has learned to advocate for himself, and stand up for his principles. Whether it was deciding to no longer stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, or deciding to write his own Pledge that represents his values, the growth has been amazing.

Natural Sciences - As an aspect of his homeschooling adventure, and my breadth area studies, we decided that we will start a garden in the spring. We would like to grow some of our own vegetables. We checked books out of the library and used numerous online resources, and have developed a plan for our garden. Natural sciences have never been an area of particular strength or personal interest for me, so this was a wonderful way to make it personal, and to grow my interest and knowledge base.

Interdisciplinary Studies - I also serve in a number of volunteer roles. I am on the Board of Directors for a youth sports organization, I coach 8-11-year-old cheerleaders, and a work with an organization that helps homeless youth to stay in school. Through this work, I come into contact with many at-risk youth, most of whom are people of color. I see firsthand how race plays a role in every aspect of these kids' lives. This was my motivation to do some in-depth research on how students of color see themselves, their schools, and their communities. I developed a research interview for middle school students of color. I met at length with a the local middle school principal, and gained his cooperation and support with conducting the interviews. I have now

drafted the application for submission to the Institutional Review Board, so that I can pursue this research next semester.

All of these steps and processes have grown me as a student, teacher, parent, and advocate. I have gained a great deal of knowledge that directly ties to the competencies set forth in my narrative application and learning contract.