

Critical Reading and Writing Instruction (Grades 4-8)

Syllabus

Purpose of Course

The purpose of this course is to prepare pre-service and early service teachers to develop a deep understanding of the research based instructional practices used to teach reading and writing in the intermediate and middle grades classroom. There will be an emphasis on using reading and writing workshop to promote critical and evaluative thinking in order to arm students with the 21st century skills needed to navigate rigorous texts and write proficiently.

A secondary purpose of this course is to help new teachers to develop the needed competencies to succeed on state mandated pedagogical exams for the upper elementary and middle school grades.

Required Textbook

Chandler, A. (2017). *The Flexible ELA Classroom: Practical Tools for Differentiated Instruction in Grades 4-8*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Format

This is an asynchronous online course. Instruction will be self-paced, and there will be no face-to-face meetings during this course.

This course is focused primarily on conveying and assessing knowledge and skills via a web-based, asynchronous learning platform. All learners will be actively engaged in learning activities with direct application for a current or future classroom. The cumulative assignment for this course will be an examination and analysis of the released state assessment in reading and writing in order to inform the candidate of the most crucial state standards to continue to review and reinforce in a variety of genres across the school year in Language Arts.

Technologies Required

Learners need:

- Access to broadband Internet-enabled computer with either Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome browser (Internet Explorer and Safari are not supported browsers for this course)
- Word-processing software
- The ability to play Flash video

Guided Learning Theory

The primary theory underlying this course is radical constructivism, as described by von Glasersfeld (1984). Like other kinds of constructivism, this theory posits that knowledge must be actively made (constructed), and that “knowing is...a search for fitting ways of behaving and thinking” (von Glasersfeld, 1984). Learners in this course will strive to make knowledge that fits with the learning expectations for the course as described in this document.

This course will also provide a series of assignments designed to help the learner construct knowledge about how to use the instructional practices presented in this course.

This course will build upon the knowledge gained in 5400 regarding the dimensions of literacy and will focus on research based instructional practices for teaching these dimensions and reinforcing the learning while building new knowledge throughout the school year.

Learning Expectations

At the conclusion of the course, it is expected that learners will:

- Understand that reading and writing are reciprocal processes and how to foster these processes in the English/Language Arts classroom to impact student growth in both reading and writing
- Understand that providing students with choice is empowering and purposefully plan ways to include student choice
- Understand the various research based instructional strategies used to teach reading and writing
- Plan lessons for reading workshop that align with state standards and use texts that are appropriate for a specific teaching point
- Understand how to group students strategically to enhance student learning
- Develop a writing lesson using mentor texts and student exemplars
- Explore ways to implement project-based learning in the ELA classroom
- Understand a variety of research based strategies for teaching English learners and create a plan for adapting vocabulary instruction to meet English learners’ instructional needs
- Explore methods for personalizing word study and vocabulary instruction and plan a lesson using vocabulary from an appropriate text
- Examine a variety of methods for both formative and summative assessment
- Analyze a released state test to better understand the state standards that are crucial to teach and reinforce across the school year

Goals and Objectives

Learning goals and objectives for the course are based on the International Literacy Association's Standards for the Preparation of Literacy Professionals

Objectives	Evidence
Standard 1: Foundational Knowledge Candidates demonstrate knowledge of the major theoretical, conceptual, and evidence-based foundations of upper elementary and adolescent literacy and language development and the ways in which they interrelate.	Assignment 1: Synthesis of the Reading/Writing Connection
Standard 2: Curriculum & Instruction Candidates apply foundational knowledge to critically examine, select, and evaluate curriculum and design: implement, adapt, and evaluate instructional approaches and materials to provide a coherent and motivating literacy program that addresses both general and discipline-specific literacy needs and processes of upper elementary and adolescent learners.	Assignment 2: Reading Workshop Lesson Plan Assignment 3: Writing Workshop Lesson Plan & Use of Project-Based Learning Assignment 4: Vocabulary Lesson Plan
Standard 3: Assessment & Evaluation Candidates understand, select, and use appropriate assessments to gather evidence on upper elementary and middle school students' language acquisition, content knowledge, literacy development and literacy processes for instructional and accountability purposes.	Assignment 5: Cumulative Project
Standard 4: Diversity & Equity Candidates examine their own culture and beliefs; set high expectations for their students; learn about and appreciate the cultures of their students, families, and communities to inform instruction.	Assignment 4: Vocabulary & Strategies for English Learners
Standard 5: Learners and the Literacy Environment Candidates apply knowledge of learner development and learning differences to create a positive, literacy-rich learning	Assignment 1: Synthesis of the Reading/Writing Connection & Providing Choice Assignment 2: Reading Workshop

environment anchored in digital and print literacies.	Lesson Plan & Use of Strategic Groupings Assignment 3: Writing Workshop Lesson Plan & Use of Project-Based Learning Assignment 4: Vocabulary and Strategies of English Learners
Standard 6: Professional Learning & Leadership Candidates are lifelong learners who reflect upon practice; use ongoing inquiry to improve their professional practice; advocate for students and their families to enhance students' literacy learning.	Assignment 5: Cumulative Project

Sequence of Instruction

As an asynchronous, self-paced course, this instruction will not be organized by weeks, but instead, will be divided into five sections:

Section 1. The Reading/Writing Connection & Student Choice

Section 2. Reading Workshop & Strategic Grouping

Section 3. Writing Workshop & Project-Based Learning

Section 4. Vocabulary & Strategies for English Learners

Section 5. Assessment, Teaching the Test Genre, & Family Partnerships

Although instruction is self-paced, it is intended to be equivalent to approximately 45 seat/contact hours, with each section of study requiring approximately 9 hours. Therefore, the course timeline is as follows:

Section	Assignments and Assessments
Section 1. The Reading/Writing Connection	Assignment 1: Synthesis of Reading/Writing Connection & Student Choice
Section 2. Reading Workshop & Student Choice	Assignment 2: Reading Workshop Lesson Plan & Use of Strategic Groupings
Section 3. Writing Workshop & Project-Based Learning	Assignment 3: Writing Workshop Lesson Plan & Use of Project-Based Learning
Section 4. Vocabulary & Strategies for English Learners	Assignment 4: Vocabulary Lesson Plan & Strategies for ELs
Section 5. Assessment, Teaching the Test Genre, & Family Partnerships	Assignment 5: Cumulative Project

Notice there are no due dates. This course is self-paced. However, all learning activities for each course in the iteach sequence must be complete before learners will be able to progress to the next course.

Grading Policy

Assignment or Assessment	Grading Details
Assignment 1: Synthesis of Reading/Writing Connection & Student Choice	1-4 scale; minimum score "2"
Assignment 2: Reading Workshop Lesson Plan & Use of Strategic Groupings	1-4 scale; minimum score "2"
Assignment 3: Writing Workshop Lesson Plan & Use of Project-Based Learning	1-4 scale; minimum score "2"
Assignment 4: Vocabulary Lesson Plan & Strategies for ELs	1-4 scale; minimum score "2"
Cumulative Project	1-4 scale; minimum score "2"
All Course Assignments	Minimum average score 2.5

Grading Scale		
4	Exemplary	Characterized by: Extraordinary initiative in completing the learning activity The work fully responds to all parts of the activity prompt. The work is thoughtful and shows exceptional insight into the teacher's role in the learning process. The work is grammatically correct and carefully proofread (0-1 error).
3	Proficient	Characterized by: The work fully responds to all parts of the activity prompt. The work shows insight into the teacher's role in the learning process. The work is grammatically correct and proofread (no more than 2 errors).
2	Basic	Characterized by: The work responds to the activity prompt. The work gives consideration to the teacher's role in the learning process. The work is mostly grammatically correct and proofread (no more than 3 errors).
1	Unsatisfactory	Characterized by: The work does not respond to the activity prompt. The work shows little to no consideration for the teacher's role in the learning process. The work has many grammatical and/or spelling errors (4 or more).

It is intended that if the teacher has not yet secured a field experience, he or she can include the learning products from this course as part of a portfolio of work to discuss during job interviews and share with hiring principals, and to adapt and implement in a future classroom once hired. If the teacher has already secured a

field experience, the items can be immediately implemented in the teacher's classroom and/or used in future years of teaching.

Evaluation

At the conclusion of the iteach program, learners will have the opportunity to provide feedback via a course survey; this feedback will be used to evaluate the course and improve subsequent course designs.

Sources

Standards. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/standards/standards-for-the-preparation-of-literacy-professionals-2017>

Von Glasersfeld, E. (1984). An introduction to radical constructivism. In Watzlawick, P. (ed). *The invented reality*. (pp. 17-40). New York, NY: Norton