

# **An Introduction to Underlying Principles and Research for Effective Literacy Instruction Course Syllabus**

## **Title**

An Introduction to Underlying Principles and Research for Effective Literacy Instruction (Grades Pre K-8)

## **Target Audience**

This course is intended for pre-service and in-service teachers of grades PreK-8.

## **Prerequisites**

There are no prerequisites for this course.

## **Course Description**

This course focuses on the fundamental principles that inform research-based literacy and reading instruction. These principles provide the foundation for past federal policies such as No-Child-Left-Behind and for more recent and current state and federal policies such as the Every Student Succeeds Act. It is designed to give educators an overview of the relationships among phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary, and fluency. Learners study the developmental stages through which young children gain independence in the use of phonemic awareness, phonics, and word recognition, as well as the increasing levels of complex skills required for students to increase their vocabulary and comprehension skills in grades K–8. Learners will also explore the literacy needs of English language learners (ELL), students with learning disabilities, and other struggling readers. As a final task, learners will create a two-week literacy plan for their classrooms. Upon completion of this course, learners will have a strong foundation of research-based literacy instruction methods and activities to draw from as they transform their teaching practices to meet the specific needs of their students, the curricular goals of their school district, and their state standards.

## **Instructor/Facilitator**

See instructor/facilitator sheet

## **Goals**

At the end of this course, learners will understand:

- The role of research and English Language Arts standards in making decisions about effective literacy instruction.
- How to use strategies for meeting the needs of students who have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (such as special education students, English Language Learners (ELL), and students from low-income environments) and students who struggle to become proficient readers.
- Concepts related to phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, fluency, spelling, writing, vocabulary development, and comprehension.
- Developmental stages of phonemic awareness and phonological awareness.
- The relationship between phonological awareness and fluency.
- Research-based comprehension strategies.
- Concepts related to motivation and learning to read and write.
- Concepts related to self-regulation of literacy skills.

### **Learner Outcomes (performance based)**

Learners completing this course will be able to:

- Discuss and explain the role of research in making decisions about effective literacy instruction for students in Grades Pre K-8.
- Design phonics, phonemic-awareness, or concept-of-print instructional activities for a specific group of students. Cite research to justify choice of activities.
- Discuss the possible causes of fluency problems, evaluate the effectiveness of activities to increase fluency, and identify adaptations to these activities to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles.
- Describe a multidimensional developmental view of reading comprehension and create a multidimensional vocabulary lesson that includes active processing.
- Discuss instructional approaches that combine direct instruction with student-centered activities for the purpose of developing self-regulated, motivated students.
- Articulate transformations in your teaching practices by creating a two-week literacy plan.

### **Outline of Content and Assignments**

This course is divided into six sessions:

- Session 1: Early Literacy Instruction
- Session 2: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics
- Session 3: Fluency
- Session 4: Vocabulary and Comprehension
- Session 5: Motivating Readers and Writers
- Session 6: Planning Future Literacy Instruction

Each session includes readings, videos, interactive activities, journal reflections, and discussion questions. Work through the sessions in order. The end of each session contains a self-assessment. Each session will provide opportunities to plan and prepare for work on the final project. Instructions for the final project are found in Session 6. In lieu of the final project, alternative projects are offered at the end of Sessions 2, 4, and 6 and are based on topics learned in the preceding sessions. There is a “Prior Knowledge” section at the beginning of each session. Learners should use this prompt to think about their current practices and their understandings of the topic for each session. Learners should use the questions in this section to determine how their understanding and practices have been changed or adjusted as a result of working through the session activities. Both of these sections are for personal reflection and will not be evaluated by the facilitator.

This course is aligned with ISTE standards, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts, and NCTE standards. Key concepts are presented with the purpose of improving content knowledge, teaching pedagogy, and enhancing student achievement. Assignments will draw upon your knowledge of classroom practice and with interactions with students of various ability levels and learning styles.

**Session 1: Early Literacy Instruction**

Learners will:

- Define professional goals and expectations for this course.
- Explain prior knowledge about how federal legislation and standards impact literacy education.
- Use course readings to discuss and explain the role of research in making decisions about effective literacy instruction for students in grades PreK–8.
- Given an example of standards-based instruction, discuss whether or not the standards are appropriate for students in grades Pre K-8 and the differences that need to be addressed relative to the students' ages and developmental backgrounds.
- Formulate specific changes they would make to their teaching practice when applying English Language Arts standards and research-based reading instruction criteria and methods.

**Session 2: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics**

Learners will:

- Discuss the implications of federal legislation on literacy education and their role in achieving federal literacy goals.
- Reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of inventive spelling in reading and writing development.
- Identify and discuss adaptations to the Making Words - Word Patterns Interactive to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles.
- Design a phonics, phonemic-awareness, or concept-of-print instructional activity for a specific group of students, using activity models provided in this session.
- Develop a list of expectations for student knowledge of phonemic awareness and phonics for a specific group of students and provide a rationale from research justifying their expectations (Alternative Project 1).

**Session 3: Fluency**

Learners will:

- Discuss the possible causes for fluency problems in K-8 students and describe intervention strategies to improve fluency.
- Given examples of fluency instruction, discuss the effectiveness of the activities and identify adaptations necessary to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles.
- Reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of encouraging students to read at a faster rate and which students might benefit from fluency instruction.
- Implement a reading fluency technique with a student and reflect on the experience.

#### **Session 4: Vocabulary and Comprehension**

Learners will:

- Explain and reflect on the development of reading comprehension and the use of critical thinking discussions across grade levels.
- Use course readings to discuss and assess the multidimensional, developmental view of comprehension and its application to classroom instruction.
- Evaluate and discuss the roles of: vocabulary instruction in developing comprehension; the instructional approaches for developing comprehension; and vocabulary instruction using information provided in course readings.
- Create a file of vocabulary activities, each of which uses an active processing approach.
- Analyze state and national standards and describe the instructional implications of meeting the standards (Alternative Project2)

#### **Session 5: Motivating Readers and Writers**

Learners will:

- Use course readings to identify and discuss instructional approaches that combine direct instruction with student-centered activities for the purpose of developing self-regulated, motivated learners.
- Reflect on how educators can turn reluctant readers and writers into self-driven, intrinsically motivated students and what suggestions from course readings may assist in the process.

#### **Session 6: Planning Future Literacy Instruction**

Learners will:

- Using the knowledge gained through course readings, interactives, discussions, and videos, design a two-week literacy plan appropriate for the needs of classroom students.
- Articulate a rationale for instructional changes incorporated into their two-week lesson plan.
- Provide feedback on two literacy plans by engaging in a peer review activity on the discussion board.
- Access learning in this course by comparing prior knowledge and acquired knowledge.
- Analyze the learning experience in this course by reflecting on their professional goals and expectations.
- Envision and create an ideal school day for a student who is participating in a research-based literacy program (Alternative Project3).

#### **Final Project: Planning Future Literacy Instruction—Transforming Practices for Your School and District**