Syllabus

Course Prefix and Number: EDCI 5414

Course Title: Theory and Practice for Early Literacy Instruction

Instructor: Mary Alice Barksdale
Office – 220B War Memorial Hall
Phone – 231-3166
Email – mab@vt.edu

Course Description:
Examines language development and early literacy teaching and learning. Explores a wide range of current theories and practices including phonics-based and meaning-based approaches to teaching. Attends to how curriculum, instruction, and assessment reflect differing agendas for literacy and schooling and different definitions of literacy.

Course Goals & Objectives:
The major objectives of this course are for students to:

- Develop and describe a set of beliefs about how children become literate.
- Describe learning and the cognitive processes involved in reading.
- Explain the meanings of key terms related to literacy instruction.
- Describe the development of oral language, reading, writing, and spelling.
- Explain the relationships among children's development of instruction in reading, writing, and spelling.
- Describe the role of different assessment methods for determining student performance in early literacy.
- Describe and conduct a variety of methods of assessment of students' literacy development in grades PK-3
- Describe comprehension processes and a classroom environment that will promote their development
- Describe a variety of instructional approaches that support students' literacy development in grades K-2
- Plan and implement reading and writing lessons at the K-2 level
- Demonstrate ability in matching and adopting materials for students having various levels of proficiency in reading, including learners of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds
- Acknowledge the developmental, linguistic, and cultural diversity among learners and discuss how these differences may influence a student's literacy development in schools.

Content Outline:

Jan. 18 (R) Introduction to the Course/Syllabus
Jan. 22 (M) Literacy Terminology, 8 Principles of Literacy Learning, Characterization Activity
Jan. 25 (R) Language, Writing, and Reading Development
Jan. 29 (M)  Approaches to Literacy Instruction  
Acronyms  
Children/Poverty  
Form groups and begin discussion of Starting Strong/Explaining Reading Lessons

Feb. 1 (R)  Concepts of Phonics
Feb. 5 (M)  Planning for Starting Strong/Explaining Reading Lessons  
Form groups and select Topics for Word Matters / Guided Reading Lessons

Feb. 8 (R)  **Starting Strong Lesson, Chapter 1**
Feb. 12 (M)  Guided Reading – Bring a children’s book to class  
**Reflective Journal due**

Feb. 15 (R) – No Class, EERA

Feb. 19 (M)  **Starting Strong Lesson, Chapter 2**
Feb. 22 (R)  Making Words Activity & Interactive Writing

Feb. 26 (M)  **Starting Strong Lesson, Chapter 3**
Mar. 1 (R)  Group Word Study Activities – Bring construction paper, scissors, markers, and tape to class & Bring “Word Matters” text  
(1) Contractions (2) Compound words (3) Base/Root words, prefixes & suffixes (4) Homophones (5) Homographs  
(Lesson Plans to be developed during class and uploaded to Resources on Scholar.)  
**Reflective Journal due**

Mar. 5 & 8 – No Class, Spring Break

Mar. 12 & 15 – Recommendation that we do not hold class sessions, but that all students attend the Virginia State Reading Association meeting in Roanoke for at least one day, March 15, 16, or 17. If students are not able to attend this meeting for at least one day, classes will be held this week.

Mar. 19 (M)  **Starting Strong Lesson, Chapter 4**
Mar. 22 (R)  Fry readability & Running Records  
2-3 page Reflections on VSRA due

Mar. 26 (M)  **Starting Strong Lesson, Chapter 6**
Mar. 29 (R)  Running Records practice – Bring 2 copies of the same children’s book to class  
**Reflective Journal due**

Apr. 2 (M)  **Explaining Reading Lesson, Part I, Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 4**  
Comprehension, fluency, story structure, metacognition  
Group in-class long-term planning project (bring textbooks and copies of SOLs for first and second grade to class to use as resources)  
**Mid-Term Exam Due in class**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 9 (M)</td>
<td>Explaining Reading Lesson, Part II, Examples for Explaining Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 12 (R)</td>
<td>Writing process, integrating writing and reading (Students as Authors Project) Sociocultural/Multicultural children’s literature, Hefflin &amp; Barksdale-Ladd article</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 16 (M)</td>
<td>Explaining Reading Lesson, Part II, Examples for Explaining Comprehension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 19 (R)</td>
<td>Strategies (Examples 4, 5, 6, 7, &amp; 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Book making (Bring non-corrugated cardboard, 1/3 yard cloth, white thread, a sturdy needle that can be pushed through 8 sheets of paper, glue, scissors, a ruler, and possibly a thimble)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 23 (M)</td>
<td>Lessons from Word Matters &amp; Guided Reading (30 minutes each)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 26 (R)</td>
<td>Students will provide feedback to peer groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr. 30 (M)</td>
<td>Celebration of Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 3 (R)</td>
<td>Child Study Projects Due in class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Evaluation of Student Outcomes:**

Do not use a cover page on projects to be turned in. Staple or clip the pages together with a metal clip – no paper clips, no report covers, no binders. The Child Study Assignment can be submitted in a manila folder with a rubber band. The Take-Home Mid-Term, all Lesson Plans and Child Study will be double-spaced except for the appendices. Use Times New Roman font, 12-point type, 1 inch margins, APA style. Use fronts of pages only; don’t print on backs.

(A) **Mid-Term Exam**

The midterm will be a take-home exam. A case of an emergent reader/writer will be provided in class the previous week, and students will be asked to: (a) describe the strengths and weaknesses of this learner based on the data provided, (b) identify what you consider to be the best approach to literacy instruction for this child and why; and (c) provide a detailed description of how you would appropriately provide/modify instruction to meet the needs of this child, as her/his classroom teacher.

(B) **Word Matters / Guided Reading Lesson**

Students will write Word Study or Guided Reading lesson plans for and teach the class these lessons in class. This project will be collaborative and will involve groups of 2-3 students. The lesson design should be for children at a specific grade level, despite the fact that it will be taught to adults. The lesson could be a guided reading lesson, a word study/word solving lesson, a language experience lesson, or an interactive writing or writing workshop lesson. Either email the lesson to the listserv or provide hard copies for all students. Include in the lesson plan the (a) objectives for learners, (b) SOL’s to be covered, (c) materials to be used, (d) detailed step-by-step procedures for the lesson, (e) a description of how learner performance will be measured (assuring that your assessment of student learning matches your learning objectives and SOL’s) and, (f) how you would evaluate your own teaching of the lesson. Each group will teach the entire lesson to the class in a period of 30 minutes. Practice the lesson before class to assure that
it is not too long or too short.

(C) Starting Strong / Explaining Reading Presentations

Groups of 2-3 students will be assigned chapters/segments from the Starting Strong or Explaining Reading texts to read and each group teach the chapters to the whole group in lessons of about 15-20 minutes. Time for planning will be provided early in the semester, then the lessons will occur on different weeks throughout the semester. Turn in the lesson plan for the 15-20 minute lesson, including (a) objectives for learners, (b) materials to be used, (c) detailed step-by-step procedures for the lesson, (d) a description of how learner performance will be measured, and (e) how you would evaluate your own teaching of the lesson. Lesson plans will be submitted on the day that the lesson is taught.

(D) Child Study Project

Rationale: The intent of this project is for students to gain a situated understanding of the theory and practice of literacy teaching and learning by applying literacy assessment and instructional strategies while working with a young child or small group of children in a service learning context. Student reflection on project application is an essential part of understanding and integrating theory and practice.

a. Student - Child Connection: Each student will be assigned a child (preferably in grades K-3, but grades 4-5 may be used if needed) with whom to work through Virginia Tech’s Service Learning Center. Placements will be within a one hour drive from Virginia Tech, so it is possible that student may drive one hour to the site, spend an hour working with the child, and drive one hour back to Blacksburg. Students must provide their own transportation. At a minimum, students are expected to work with the child for 15 hours – one hour per week for fifteen weeks. If there are snow days or other days when it is not possible to go to the school site, students will be expected to “make up” the time by going twice per week on other weeks. More than fifteen hours is recommended if it is possible to arrange it. The greater the amount of time spent working with the child, the greater your opportunity for making significant gains relative to literacy teaching and learning.

b. Meet with school coordinator and/or child’s teacher: Once the placement has been made, students should schedule a time to meet with the school or site coordinator and/or the child’s teacher to talk about the child’s background and literacy needs.

c. Letter to family: Compose a letter to the child’s family introducing yourself and describing what you plan to do with your child. (We can talk about this letter in class.)

d. Maintain a Teaching and Learning Reflection Journal: Teaching and learning is a reciprocal process. The Reflection Journal is an opportunity to write about the child’s literacy learning. Students will write about their own understanding of the teaching and learning process and their development as a teacher of literacy. Start each journal entry with your lesson plan for the session. Next, include a description of how the lesson actually occurred, and discuss your evaluation of the child and yourself with regard to the evaluation part of the lesson plan. Then address these questions:

- What did I learn today about my child as an individual? What did I learn about my child as a literate person?
- What did I learn about myself as a teacher?
- What did I learn about teaching and learning?
• What did I learn about teaching and learning in literacy?
• What questions has this session raised in my mind? How am I going to address these questions? Where will I go to find answers?
• How will I use what I learned today about my child to plan for the next session?

Record your journal electronically, and make hard copies or back-ups each week in case of an electronic emergency. Also, be sure to write journal entries very soon after sessions with the child. In order to write truly reflective entries, the session should be fresh in your mind.

The Reflection Journal will be submitted several times during the semester. When you submit it at the end of the semester, you will submit the copies that have already been responded to by the instructor.

e. **Meet with child once a week:** The student should schedule weekly meetings with the child during which the student and elementary learner can interact. The work between the VT student and the child is expected to be holistic in nature – that is, in addition to the academic needs of the child, holistic approaches to instruction should address the cognitive, emotional, motivational, and sociocultural needs of the child. Holistic literacy instruction for children is founded upon the existing knowledge, interests, talents, and passions of the child. The student will design literacy interactions for the child that will include reading, writing, and listening to, speaking about, and viewing texts. Every session should include creative activities that will engage the child in some type of literacy learning in a pleasant, non-threatening atmosphere. Students are encouraged to integrate art, music, nature, movement, social studies, science, and math in the interactions. Evidence of creative activities based upon the knowledge and interests of the child should be included in every lesson plan. Meetings with the child should involve one-on-one lessons. Expected time for contact with the child should be one hour per week.

f. **In-depth description of child:** Get to know your child’s personality, interests, knowledge, talents, and attitudes towards self, others, and school throughout the project. Discuss these observations in the reflection journal. Use this data gathered across the semester in writing a rich description of the child’s family, personal background, experiences, interests, special areas of knowledge, and all that you learn about the child as a person for the final project.

a. **Assess and interpret child’s literacy development:** During class and through course readings, the student will learn how to assess and interpret children’s literacy development. The student will use selected assessment tools and determine the child’s developmental levels in reading, writing, and word study.

  **Overall literacy development:** The student will interview and discuss informally with the child, the child’s literacy interests, talents, family and personal background, and other issues that affect literacy acquisition and development.

  **Reading:** Depending on the developmental level of your child, the student will select a minimum of 3 assessment tools such as those listed below to analyze the child’s reading development:

  • Running Records and analysis - required if the child is reading (minimum of two running records across the minimum 15 sessions. Each Running Record should take no more than 10 minutes.)
  • Observation checklists and anecdotal records
• Other assessment tools suggested in course readings or course meetings
  
Writing
• Analysis of at least one writing sample created by the child

Word Study
• Error Analysis (Word Matters p.121 & Appendix 52)

b. Plan for instruction: During the course, students will create and implement some specific kinds of literacy interactions for scheduled sessions with the selected child. Plans for these sessions should be based upon the child’s literacy development as interpreted through the above assessments. It is expected that this instruction should engage children in interactions that lead to cognitive growth.

Students will develop 5 specific literacy activities:
  • Read-Aloud
  • Guided Reading
  • Writing
  • Word Study
  • Integrated plan including guided reading, writing, and word study

The other ten lesson plans may be in these categories, but can also be of other kinds.

The Lesson Plan for every meeting with the child should include: (1) goals for yourself and for the child, (2) learning objectives for the child, (3) books and materials to be used, (4) procedures (a detailed description of each segment of the lesson, what you will do, what the child will be asked to do, and how long each segment is expected to last) (5) closure (how you will bring the lesson to a conclusion) and (6) evaluation of the child and yourself (evaluations can be very informal; however, they should specifically identify how you will assess the degree to which the child met the learning objectives you identified, and how you will assess the goals you identified for yourself)

g. Final Project to be Submitted:

1. Introduction: Introduction of child that includes a rich description of the child as a person (i.e. family background, interests, areas of knowledge, talents, personality characteristics), child’s literacy behaviors - oral language, reading and writing behaviors. (i.e. does the child like to read; spend time writing…?) What do you notice about your child? What do you notice about your child’s literacy behaviors? This section should let the reader know how much you have learned about your child as a person across the semester.

2. Literacy Assessment Summary: A written summary of assessment results in the three categories of reading, writing, and word study, including a description of the child’s developmental levels in reading, writing, and word study and what the child can do in these three areas. Identify areas for continued growth. Your analysis should focus on your understanding of the child’s developing literacy processing systems based on the external signs exhibited through the assessments. You should cite from an analysis based upon the specific assessments used (the actual assessments will be included in the appendices).

3. Instructional Recommendations for the Future: Description of 2-4 instructional goals for the child in each of the disciplines of reading, writing, and word study and at least one specific recommended instructional strategy to meet
each goal in the areas of reading, writing, and word study. Next, discuss what teaching would you plan for this child if you were the child’s teacher?

4. **Lesson Plans and Work Artifacts**: Include the five specific literacy lesson plans for the Read-Aloud, Guided Reading, Writing, Word Study, and Integrated lesson plan for guided reading, writing, and word study, and copies of the child’s work samples from each of these 5 activities.

5. **Child Study Project Reflection Essay**: A reflective essay of 2-3 pages that summarizes what the student has learned from this experience. The essay should address these questions:
   - What information have I learned from this child that I did not know previously? This is not what you learned about the child, but what knowledge did you gain through your interactions with this child that you did not already know?
   - What do teachers need to do in order to learn from their students?
   - What have I learned about teaching literacy?
   - What questions do I have about teaching literacy?
   - What have I learned about literacy development?
   - What have I learned about myself as a teacher?
   - What have I learned about a teacher’s role in shaping a child’s literate mind?

6. **Appendices**:
   - Copies of the assessments
   - Copy of the letter to the child’s family.
   - Teaching and Learning Reflection Journal (include the copies on which responses have already been written by the instructor).

**Oral Presentation and Celebration of Learning**:
On the last day of class, students will prepare a brief (approximately five-ten minute) oral presentation on the Child Study Project. The session will be a celebration of all that students have learned about literacy teaching and learning.

**A Note on Professional Language**:
Describe the child’s behavior without making judgments. Students should use professional language in all parts of this project. Examples: Avoid using words like, “Child is a low (or high) reader.” Instead, you will learn to use terms like “emergent reader” or “early writer.” Avoid using words like, “The child seemed lazy.” Instead the student should describe the child’s behaviors. Example: “The child did not complete the assignment and took several minutes to get started on the next task.”

(E) **Portaportal**

Each student will create a portaportal (http://www.portaportal.com/) to support student learning in literacy. The portaportal should include links to web sites that will support early literacy learning, and it should be designed primarily to include links for children. For an example, go to the portaportal website and use “mbar” in the guest access box on the right. Include at least 20 links, divided by categories, in your portaportal.

**Grading Criteria:**
All assignments are due during class on the dates indicated on the syllabus. For each 24 hour period that an assignment is turned in late, 2 points will be taken from the grade on the assignment. Points for each course component will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Matters / Guided Reading Lesson</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting Strong/Explaining Reading Presentations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portaportal</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Study</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grading:**

- **A** 95-100
- **A-** 90-94
- **B+** 87-89
- **B** 83-86
- **B-** 80-82
- **C+** 77-79
- **C** 73-76
- **C-** 70-72
- **F** 69 or below

_The instructor of this course is committed to social justice and expects to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication and mutual respect. Any suggestions as to how to further such an environment will be appreciated and given serious consideration._

_If you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability (learning disability, attention deficit disorder, psychological, physical, etc.), if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible._

**Textbooks:**