EDUC 403: Individualizing Reading and Writing Instruction in the Elementary and Middle School Classroom

Instructor information
Will Toledo
wtoledo@umich.edu
Office hours: By appointment
Room 3115

Class location and Times
School of Education, Room 2229
Tuesdays, 8:30-11:30 AM

Course Description
In EDUC 403, you will learn to design and enact comprehensive, balanced, and engaging literacy programs that advance the literacy learning of a broad range of children in grades 3-8. We will build on the work you have done in EDUC 401, recognizing that, as children proceed through the grades, the expectation is that they will gain independence in their use of reading and writing for the purposes of engaging in content area study (e.g., science, social studies, literature, and mathematics), as well as their personal and social development. Thus, when students reach the upper elementary and middle school grades, our attention as literacy educators is increasingly focused on: comprehension, vocabulary, and composition so that our students have the tools and dispositions to construct meaning through reading, writing, viewing, and speaking.

The content of this course is aligned with the International Reading Association's Standards for Reading Professionals, which can be found at http://www.reading.org/general/CurrentResearch/Standards/ProfessionalStandards2010.aspx. These standards represent the consensus of the leading international professional organization for reading education about what teachers should know and be able to do. The content of this course was also informed by the new Common Core State Standards, the first widely-adopted national set of ELA standards. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent a shared vision of what students should know and be able to do. This course will prepare you to support your future students in achieving the goals described in these standards.

In this course, you will:

• begin developing a deeper understanding of the kinds of texts that students in the upper elementary and middle-school grades are expected to read, and the array of purposes for which they are expected to read,
• begin to learn how to analyze texts for their challenges and opportunities, so that instruction can be planned accordingly,
• begin developing an understanding of the instructional strategies that support student engagement in self-regulated learning from text,
• begin to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to engage in productive discussions with text
• begin developing a deeper understanding of how to teach both composition and aspects of the craft of writing, including the conventions of grammar, mechanics, and usage,
• continue to develop an understanding of vocabulary development and instructional strategies that support that development,
• continue to develop your understanding of reading assessments appropriate for upper-elementary and middle-school children and youth,
• develop thoughtful and motivating literacy assignments related to literature and content-area texts
• explore the productive use of information and communication technologies to advance student learning,
• continue to advance your thinking about the kind of classroom culture you wish to cultivate and how the curricular and pedagogical decisions you make will influence that culture,
• continue to support your thinking about the ways in which instructional decisions must be shaped by issues of: development, and individual linguistic, cognitive, and cultural differences,
• advance your capacity to design literacy programs that reflect your knowledge of curriculum, assessment, instruction, and state and national standards,
• continue to support the development of your identity as a literacy educator, including learning about professional resources and organizations that can support that identity, learn to plan and lead reading and writing workshops.

Course Readings and Materials

There are three required books for this class (available at the Barnes & Noble in the Michigan Union):


Course Assignments & Grading

**Assignment Guidelines and Due Dates.** We expect that all assignments for this course will be turned in on time. If extenuating circumstances prevent you from turning in an assignment on time, please contact me via email prior to the submission deadline. Unexcused late work will impact your grade in correspondence with how late the work is submitted. You must receive a C or better in each of your courses to remain in the program. Late assignments will be marked down one grade (from A+ to A to A- to B+ to B, etc.) for each day that it is late. *Detailed instructions will be provided for each assignment.*

Course Assignments, Due Dates, and Points Values
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>% of Total Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Based Reading Project</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment Memo</td>
<td>2/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Plan</td>
<td>2/17&amp;1</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enactment Study Group Preparation</td>
<td>2/24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Evaluation and Analysis</td>
<td>3/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Based Writing Project</td>
<td>3/10-3/12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher observation and gathering student products</td>
<td>3/24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-evaluation and Analysis</td>
<td>4/14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Quizzes (3 Total)</td>
<td>2/10, 3/10, 4/7</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking Ahead Reflections</td>
<td>4/24</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Class attendance and participation.** You are expected to attend every class, *arrive on time and prepared*, and participate actively in all course activities. Participation will be assessed in terms of your active engagement in our discussions, your support of the work of others, your thoughtfulness, and your willingness to take intellectual risks with your scholarship. While illness and emergencies do occasionally arise, please make every effort to be at class. Unexcused absences are not permitted and are grounds for failing the course. If you must miss class due to religious holidays, please coordinate this with the instructor by the end of the second week of the course. Please do not come to class if you are sick. If you must be absent, you should contact me by email prior to class. It is your responsibility to make arrangements to get the information you missed in class; contact a classmate who can collect handouts for you and explain what you missed. If you must miss class for any reason, you will need to write a **two-page summary** of the assigned readings. This summary will be due 48 hours after class. This is the only way to earn participation points when you are absent. Excused absences will be considered unexcused if you fail to submit this paper, and 10 points will be deducted from your participation grade. It is your responsibility to submit this paper electronically by the due date without reminders from the course instructors.

**Field Based Reading Project.** Partnering with one other intern in the same placement classroom, each intern with conduct and interview and think aloud with two students. The pairs of interns will use the data they gather to develop and teach two instructional sessions for all four students. Each intern will lead one session. The intern pair will then work with another pair to analyze the instruction.
Field Based Writing Project. After observing a writing lesson, you will gather the writing products from every student in the class. With your field-placement partner, you will analyze the writing in terms of the teacher’s objectives for that lesson and will plan and enact a follow up lesson. To enact the lesson, you will split the class in half and you will teach half of the class on either 3/24 or 3/26. You will then gather the final writing product once again to inform your final analysis and reflection and share these results with your mentor teacher.

In-Class Quizzes. Three times during the semester (see Course Schedule below), you will take an in-class written quiz, assessing your understanding of the material covered in class and in the assigned readings. You will have the opportunity to revise one quiz.

Looking Ahead Reflection. You will write a prospective description of literacy instruction in your future classroom, including the components of your literacy program, strategies for assessment, and strategies for differentiation.

Grades. The scale converting points/percentages to letter grades is as follows:

- 94-100 = A
- 90-93.9 = A-
- 88-89.9 = B+
- 84-87.9 = B
- 80-83.9 = B-
- 77-79.9 = C+
- 74-76.9 = C
- 70-73.9 = C-
- 67-69.9 = D+
- 64-66.9 = D

Course Logistics

Written work. Please make sure that all written work is double-spaced with 12 point, Times New Roman font with 1” borders, and submitted with the file name as follows: lastname_assignment. Please submit all written work as a word .doc or .docx.

Personal technology use. Appropriate use of electronic devices is also a part of your professional participation in our class. Using laptops or cell phones as tools for your learning is acceptable, as long as it is not distracting to your colleagues or your instructor. Examples of acceptable use of electronic devices include making records of your practice and consulting resources for work in class. Noninstructional use (e.g. texting, phone calls, social networking, shopping) of these devices is not acceptable in this class at any time, and will result in a reduction in your participation grade.

Communication. Email will be used extensively as a form of communication in this course. Please check your email frequently for course announcements. You are encouraged to contact the instructors as needed via email.

Owning your work and citing the work of others. You will draw on multiple resources as you complete assignments for this course—readings, conversations with peers and colleagues, Internet resources, and your experiences. When you write lessons or other assignments for this class, you MUST provide citations and attributions for the work of others included in your written work. This
includes references or resources in any media form you used. As a professional practice, you should also footnote and succinctly describe and attribute ideas that were generated in conversation with others.

**Accommodations.** Please talk with me if you require accommodations for religious practices, learning disabilities, physical requirements, medical needs or any other reason. We will work together to identify resources and make accommodations.

**Class Schedule**

**Week 1: January 13, 2015**

**Getting Started: ELA Instruction in Grades 3-8**

**Guiding Questions**

What do students learn to do in ELA, Grades 3-8?
What is reading comprehension? How have our collective understandings about comprehension changed over time?
What do the standards expect students to learn about comprehension in grades 3-8?

**Class Activities**

Get oriented to the course and to the goals and structure of ELA instruction in grades 3-8
Consider different perspectives on comprehension
Apply the RAND model of reading to our observations of instruction in placement classrooms
Examine the CCSS standards in order to characterize the goals of reading instruction in grades 3-8
Introduction to Field Based Reading Project

☐ **[Field this week]** Field Based Reading Project: Work with your mentor teacher to identify two students who could benefit from additional support for reading comprehension. Identify a time during the weeks of 1/19 & 1/26 when you can conduct a think aloud and interview with each student (at least 20 minutes each).

☐ **[Field this week]** Make note of classroom characteristics you observe related to comprehension in your field placements using the Reading Environment Observation Protocol. Upload a scan of this 24 hours before class and bring the hardcopy to class.

**Week 2: January 20, 2015**

**Understanding and Assessing Reading Comprehension**

**Assignments Due**


☐ Bring Reading Environment Observation Protocol to class.
☐ [Field this week] Field Based Reading Project: Conduct a think aloud and interview with one of the two students you selected in cooperation with your mentor teacher. Record and selectively transcribe the think aloud. (See assignment guidelines for more detailed instructions.)

Guiding Questions

What are some common myths about comprehension?
What’s going on with students who struggle to comprehend?
How do we assess comprehension? (Part I)

Class Activities

Connect observations of practice to the CCSS expectations
Confront common myths about comprehension
Experience comprehension breakdowns
Examine standardized comprehension assessments to determine what they can (and can’t) tell us about students’ comprehension
Practice using think aloud protocols and interviews as assessments of comprehension

Week 3: January 27, 2015

Creating Classroom Environments that Support Reading Comprehension

Assignments Due

☐ Read guided reading chapter in Fountas and Pinnell, pp. 190-215 (pp. 216-222 optional)
☐ Watch guided reading video
☐ [Field this week] Field Based Reading Project: Conduct a think aloud and interview with one of the two students you selected in cooperation with your mentor teacher. Record and selectively transcribe the think aloud. (See assignment guidelines for more detailed instructions.)

Guiding Questions

How do we assess comprehension? (Part II)
How can teachers create classroom environments that support comprehension?
What dispositions do excellent reading teachers bring to their practice?
How do students continue to develop their reading fluency in the upper elementary and middle grades?

Class Activities

Consider other approaches to comprehension assessment, including surveys and conferring
View a video of instruction through different lenses—dispositions, characteristics, practices
Learn strategies for supporting students’ fluency development
Understand the purpose and method of guided reading
Week 4: February 3, 2015

Teaching Reading Comprehension

Assignments Due

☐ Field Based Reading Project Memos: A memo about each student in which you summarize what you learned about each student, including preliminary recommendations about instruction based on the assessment and grade-level standards. Submit the memo to CTools before class. Bring the memos and think aloud data to class.
☐ [Field this week] Field Based Reading Project: Share your memos with your mentor teacher and get feedback from them. Work with the teacher to identify text(s) for your guided reading groups. Bring the book(s) to the next class.

Guiding Questions

What are effective instructional practices for supporting comprehension?
How do teachers analyze texts for their instructional potential and challenges?
How do teachers lead comprehension-supportive discussions?
How do teachers teach comprehension strategies?

Class Activities

Debrief Field Based Reading Project think aloud data and interviews and revise
Analyze texts and plan for guided reading lessons using those texts
Refine and demonstrate knowledge of comprehension strategy instruction
Review for quiz

Week 5: February 10, 2015

Motivation and Collaboration in Support of Reading Comprehension: Beyond Choice and Interest

Assignments Due

☐ Read Almasi & Fullerton, Chapter 9: “Conclusion,” pages 302-320.
☐ Field Based Reading Project Lesson Plans: Submit the lesson plan you will lead on CTools before class. Bring books for this lesson to class.
☐ Watch video of instructional routines/frameworks
☐ [Field this week] Field Based Reading Project: Teach the sessions you have planned with your partner, videotaping both.

Guiding Questions

What strategies do teachers use to develop students’ motivation to read and engagement with reading?
How do teachers confer with individual students in support of comprehension?
What instructional frameworks support comprehension?

**Class Activities**

Quiz on reading comprehension development and instruction  
Consider the role of motivation in reading comprehension and ways to build intrinsic motivation for reading  
Develop comprehension supportive practices based on cases  
Watch videos of comprehension conferences and deconstruct this practice  
Jigsaw comprehension instructional frameworks  
Guided reading rehearsal

**Week 6: February 17, 2015**

**Strategies for Word Solving and Word Learning**

**Assignments Due**

☐ Read Cobb & Blachowicz, Sections 1 & 2 (pages 1-41).  
☐ Field Based Reading Project: Watch the video of your enactment and prepare for the Enactment Study Group. Upload your Enactment Study Group preparation sheet to CTools before class.

**Guiding Questions**

How do we collaborate with colleagues to improve instruction?  
What is the role of language and vocabulary development in comprehension and composition?  
How can we support students’ development of broad and rich vocabularies?

**Class Activities**

Round 1 of enactment study groups  
Discuss reading on vocabulary development  
Consider two components of an effective vocabulary instructional program: direct instruction of word meanings and wide reading  
Practice strategies for supporting word analysis, including morphological analysis and multisyllabic decoding

**NO field this week – Plymouth Canton Schools Mid-Winter Break (Feb 16-20)**

**Week 7: February 24, 2015**

**Developing Language in Support of Comprehension and Composition**

**Assignments Due**

☐ Read Cobb & Blachowicz, Section 3 (pages 42-80).  
☐ Field Based Reading Project: Watch the video of your enactment and prepare for the Enactment Study Group. Upload your Enactment Study Group preparation sheet to CTools before class.
Guiding Questions

How can we support students’ incidental acquisition of vocabulary knowledge?
What does it mean to create a language-rich classroom?

Class Activities

Round 2 of enactment study groups
Consider two components of an effective vocabulary instructional program: word learning strategies and word consciousness
Engage in a set of activities designed to support students’ vocabulary development using all four components of a vocabulary program
Review for quiz

Week 8: March 3, 2015

NO CLASS

Week 9: March 10, 2015

Writing in Grades 3-8 and The Writing Workshop

Assignments Due

☐ Read Fletcher & Portalupi (2001) The Writing Workshop Ch 1 & 2 (pp. 1-19) on CTools
☐ Read Lucy Calkins Chapter on Writing Minilessons, pp. 55-68 on CTools
☐ Field Based Reading Project: Complete your self-evaluation and reflection. Upload to CTools before class.
☐ [Field this week] Field Based Writing Project: Observe your mentor teacher teaching a writing lesson and gather written products from all students. Composition Instruction Observation Guide.

Guiding Questions

What is writing?
According to the CCSS, what do students learn about writing in grades 3-8?
What are the writing competencies we want to support?
What is the writer’s workshop?
What is a minilesson and how does it fit within writer’s workshop?

Class Activities

Quiz on vocabulary and language development
Discuss the role of writing in schools and purposes for writing more broadly
Identify the structure and components of the writing workshop
Examine the CCSS standards in order to characterize the goals of writing instruction in grades 3-8
Prepare for Field Based Writing Project
Week 10: March 17, 2015

Assessing Writing and The Opinion/Argument Genre

Assignments Due

- Read Reading and Writing With Purpose in K-8 Classrooms, Ch. 6, pp. 136-164
- Read model writing minilesson plans (On CTools)
- Field Based Writing Project: Bring student’ writing products and observation notes from lesson observed in the field to class

Guiding Questions

- How do we assess writing?
- What does a good model of a writing minilesson plan look like?
- What is an opinion/argument piece of writing?

Class Activities

- Practice assessing student writing using Smarter Balance rubric
- Consider the role of conferring, anecdotal notes and other forms of assessment
- Review student’ writing products with partner and brainstorm what to teach
- Use the standards and data to make decisions about the lesson
- Deconstruct model writing minilesson plans
- Discuss the stages of an argument and the various types of arguments

Week 11: March 24, 2015

The Writing Process and The Informative/Explanatory Genre

Assignments Due

- Read Reading and Writing With Purpose in K-8 Classrooms, Ch. 4, 78-109
- Field Based Writing Assignment Lesson Plan: Upload lesson plan to CTools before class.
- [Field this week] Field Based Writing Project: Co-teach the writing lesson with partner and gather the written products.

Guiding Questions

- What is a writing process?
- How can teachers support students in being strategic with writing?
- What is the informative/explanatory genre?

Class Activities

- Discuss the writing process: the benefits and challenges for students
- Explore the informative/explanatory genre
- Review writing lesson plans and rehearse teaching
Week 12: March 31, 2015

The Narrative Genre and Technology for Literacy

Assignments Due

☐ Read Reading and Writing With Purpose in K-8 Classrooms, Ch. 2, pp. 22-51
☐ Field Based Writing Project Analysis: Bring lesson plan and student work from writing lesson to class

Guiding Questions

What is a narrative?
What grammar are students expected to know and master in grades 3-8?
What can we learn from the analysis of our teaching and what students write in response?
How can technology enhance literacy learning?
How do students interact with and comprehend digital texts versus print?

Class Activities

Review grammar rules
Design a grammar mini-lesson and teach the lesson to a colleague
Explore the narrative genre by deconstructing a model and generating a personal narrative
Analyze results of Field Based Writing Project
Investigate technology resources for curriculum and instruction in literacy
Review for quiz

Week 13: April 7, 2015

English Language Development & Structuring ELA in Your Classroom

Assignments Due

☐ Read Goldenberg (2008) or Gibbons (2006) on CTools as assigned

Guiding Questions

What are the CCSS for language grades 3-8?
How can we differentiate comprehension and writing instruction to meet the needs of EL?
What is the role of oral language in literacy development?
What are common ways of structuring the ELA block in today's classrooms?

Class Activities

Apply readings to classroom-based cases and learn additional strategies for capitalizing on linguistic diversity as a resource in the classroom
Exploring resources for teaching ELs (Colorin Colorado & http://crede.berkeley.edu/pdf/epr01.pdf)
Quiz on writing processes and writing instruction
Begin working on final assignment
**NO field this week – Plymouth Canton Schools Spring Break (April 6 - 10)**

**Week 14: April 14, 2015**

**Putting it All Together**

**Assignments Due**

☐ Field Based Writing Project: Share writing projects in class and upload to CTools before class

**Guiding Questions**

- What are the big take-aways and memorable experiences from this term?
- What knowledge, skills and dispositions will you continue to cultivate to support the upper elementary and middle school learner’s literacy development?
- How do you individualize your instruction to meet the needs of all learners?
- Envision your future classroom: character, quality and routines.

**Class Activities**

- Mixed-grade level group sharing of writing projects
- Celebration of the term
- Lingering questions
- Review of major teaching and learning points from the term

**Looking Ahead: Future Classroom Envisioning Paper – Due Friday, April 24**