Professional Development Institute

Flex Course Syllabus

Interventions for Middle Grade Struggling Readers (4-6)

PDI Course Number: 111T02

UCSD Course Number: EDUC40245

If you would like information about receiving post-baccalaureate (graduate) credit for completing this course, please click here.

Course Timeline

Participants have one year to complete the course. Participants must spend a minimum of three weeks in this course.

Course Description

Do you have struggling readers in your class? Are you challenged to find strategies that can truly help these readers become successful? This online course begins by introducing the building blocks of the reading process and the role that each of them plays in effective reading instruction. Evidence-based interventions are explored as they relate to deficits in phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension skills. Teachers will learn how to incorporate the use of think-alouds, interactive read-alouds, graphic organizers, and hi-lo books to improve their students' reading performance. Additionally, strategies for building student's background knowledge, vocabulary knowledge, and understanding of text structure will also be explored. Teachers will also learn how to weave a variety of strategies into their content curriculum so that students can more effectively comprehend informational texts. Teachers will also learn the critical role that informal assessments play in the teaching of reading and how these assessments can be used to create targeted remediation plans for struggling readers. By the end of the course, teachers will understand how to best help their struggling readers so that they can make dramatic improvements in reading skills and comprehension.

Educational Outcomes

1. Teachers will learn the five critical building blocks of effective reading instruction.
2. Teachers will learn how to incorporate some common decoding strategies such as chunking, looking for patterns, and using word families into their already-existing curriculum.
3. Teachers will learn the six areas of oral language and how they relate to vocabulary development and reading comprehension.
4. Teachers will learn specific strategies for differentiating their reading instruction, especially during small group instruction and guided reading.
5. Teachers will be introduced to the two broad categories of learning disabilities and the factors which are commonly associated with reading problems.
6. Teachers will learn how to identify students with reading difficulties.
7. Teachers will learn how an ADHD diagnosis can affect students' reading comprehension and what can be done in the classroom to help these struggling readers.
8. Teachers will learn how to use such strategies as reading interest inventories, e-readers, and alternative text to stimulate motivation.
9. Teachers will learn specific strategies for addressing phonological deficits in their struggling readers.
10. Teachers will learn specific strategies for addressing phonics deficits in their struggling readers.
11. Teachers will learn specific strategies for addressing vocabulary deficits in their struggling readers.
12. Teachers will learn specific strategies for addressing fluency deficits in their struggling readers.
13. Teachers will learn specific strategies for addressing comprehension deficits in their struggling readers.
14. Teachers will learn how to increase comprehension by employing think-alouds and interactive read-alouds.
15. Teachers will learn how to read closely through the use of graphic organizers and mind maps.
16. Teachers will learn how to effectively use hi-lo books to increase comprehension in their struggling readers.
17. Teachers will understand how informational text provides unique challenges to struggling readers.
18. Teachers will learn how to boost comprehension through the explicit teaching of text features and text structures.
19. Teachers will understand the importance and connection that background knowledge has to the comprehension of informational text.
20. Teachers will learn specific strategies for building students' background knowledge.
21. Teachers will be introduced to the different types of content area vocabulary and will learn specific strategies for teaching same.
22. Teachers will understand the necessary criteria for determining which content area vocabulary words to teach.

23. Teachers will understand the role that informal assessment plays in reading comprehension, and they will learn how to use the different types of informal assessment to guide their instruction.
24. Teachers will learn how to incorporate each student's zone of proximal development in order to set S.M.A.R.T. reading goals.
25. Teachers will learn how to create individual reading profiles so that individual reading plans can be co-created with students.
26. Teachers will understand the basics of RtI (Response to Intervention) and how it can be used to provide evidence-based interventions for all five critical building blocks of effective reading instruction.
27. Teachers will explore several evidence-based reading interventions for all five critical building blocks of effective reading instruction.

Instructional Media

- Online Discussions
- Online Engagement
- Online Collaboration
- Instructor Feedback
- Instructor Interaction
- Online Resources and Websites
- Supplemental Instructional Materials
- Printable Classroom Resources

Evaluation

- Test #1 (5% of final grade)
- Test #2 (5% of final grade)
- Test #3 (5% of final grade)
- Test #4 (5% of final grade)
- Test #5 (5% of final grade)
- Autobiography and Goals for the Course (10% of final grade)
- Article/Video Reflection (15% of final grade)
- Course Collaboration/Share Ideas with the Class (10% of final grade)
- Cumulative Assignment/Project: Respond to Classroom Scenarios (20% of final grade)
- Culminating Practicum (20% of final grade)

Topical Outline

Unit One
- The Building Blocks of Effective Reading Instruction
- Decoding Words and Language Development
- The Art of Differentiation

- **Assignment #1**
  Write an autobiography including information about yourself, your grade level and what you specifically hope to learn about helping struggling readers. Your autobiography should be a minimum of three paragraphs.
- **Test #1**

Unit Two

- The Face of Reading Impairments
- The Influence of ADHD on Reading Achievement
- Motivating Struggling Readers
- **Assignment #2**
  As an educator, it is important to be aware of the research, studies, and professional work done in the field. In the course, you will find an article and video that are relevant to the specific course content. Read the article and then write an essay with your thoughts.
- **Test #2**

Unit Three

- Phonological and Phonics Deficits
- Vocabulary and Fluency Deficits
- Comprehension Deficits
- **Assignment #3**
  Online Discussion Board Participation/Engagement: Please post a tip, strategy, or idea that specifically relates to helping struggling readers at the 4-6 grade level and will make a difference to other teachers in their own classrooms. Your assignment should be a minimum of three paragraphs and detailed enough for another teacher to easily follow. This is a great opportunity to share and collaborate with other teachers at your grade level around the country. Take time to review and respond to other postings that are relevant to your classroom population in order to gain effective ideas to use immediately in your classroom
- **Test #3**

Unit Four

- Using Think-Alouds and Interactive Read-Alouds to Improve Comprehension
- Improving Comprehension of Narrative Texts through Graphic Organizers and Mind Maps
- Using Hi-Lo Books to Improve Comprehension
- **Test #4**

Unit Five

- The Structure of Informational Text

- Building Background Knowledge before Diving into Informational Text
- Working with Content Area Vocabulary
- **Test #5**

Unit Six

- The Importance of Informal Assessments
- Creating a Remediation Plan
- Evidence-Based Interventions
- **Assignment #4**
  Take a look at the following five typical classroom scenarios. They all involve students who are experiencing difficulty with reading. Next, brainstorm ways in which you, as their teacher, can help each student become better readers. Then, describe how the student could be assessed so as to determine whether or not the intervention is appropriate. Each scenario should be responded to a minimum of three paragraphs. The first paragraph should address what you believe to be the problem. What clues brought you to this determination? The second paragraph should discuss how you, as the teacher, can help the student overcome his/her deficit(s). What strategies will you use? What is your plan? The third paragraph should discuss the assessment piece. What data will you use? How will you know if the prescribed intervention is working?
- **Assignment #5**
  The culminating practicum is a three-step process. (1) In the first assignment, you were asked what goals you had and what you hoped to learn from the course. Think back to your original goals for this course. Write a minimum two-paragraph reflection specifically describing how what you learned can be used to help you reach those goal(s). (2) Next, write a minimum three-paragraph plan that specifically describes the ways in which you intend to implement a particular strategy you learned in this course into your own teaching situation. (3) Last, write a minimum two-paragraph reflection describing a student you have or have had in the past. Then, discuss how the strategies you learned in this course will specifically benefit that student as you put your plan into action.

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