



## **Professional Development Institute**

### **Flex Course Syllabus**

# **Reading and Writing Strategies for Students with Special Needs (K-5)**

**PDI Course Number: 134T02**

**UCSD Course Number: EDUC42383**

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**

As more and more students with special needs find their way into inclusive classrooms, do you find yourself stretching to accommodate their diverse learning needs? This online course is specifically designed to address the myriad literacy needs of students with learning disabilities who are present in general education K-5 classrooms. The course begins by introducing teachers to the science of reading so that they can understand why so many students with learning disabilities tend to struggle with reading and writing. From there, an overview of the MTSS framework is provided to help teachers understand the process of moving struggling students through the various literacy interventions throughout the tiers. Teachers will take a deep dive into all the foundational components of literacy as they explore numerous strategies and interventions to help students with special needs succeed and exceed in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing. Throughout this course, teachers will learn how to use developmentally-appropriate activities, lessons, and interventions to help students with learning disabilities increase their literacy skills, often using a multi-sensory approach. By the end of this course, teachers will feel more confident and successful in their quest to embed best literacy practices into their K-5 classrooms so that the needs of all students can be met.

## Educational Outcomes

1. Teachers will be introduced to the science of reading, and they will explore how it relates to the elements of an effective “Big Five” reading lesson.
2. Teachers will learn the various stages of writing development (emergent, early, and fluent).
3. Teachers will understand the reasons why students struggle with reading and writing, including such things as the underdevelopment of the “Big Five,” a lack of background knowledge, oral language deficits, working memory deficits, and poor executive functions, and they will learn a variety of strategies to offset these deficits.
4. Teachers will explore how a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) framework can be used to help struggling students perform better in terms of reading and writing.
5. Teachers will explore phonemic awareness in detail, and they will understand how a lack of knowledge in this area can lead to reading and writing disabilities.
6. Teachers will learn a variety of strategies that can be used to help struggling students become more proficient with their phonemic awareness skills.
7. Teachers will understand the influence that fluency has on reading and writing.
8. Teachers will be introduced to the six elements of reading fluency (pausing, phrasing, stress, intonation, rate, integration), and they will learn how a lack in any one area can affect students’ fluency skills.
9. Teachers will learn a variety of strategies that can be used to help struggling students become more proficient with their fluency skills.
10. Teachers will understand how the different types of vocabulary (listening, speaking, reading, writing) and the three tiers of words influence comprehension, and how a lack in any one area can cause reading and writing disabilities.
11. Teachers will be introduced to dyslexia, a very common reading disability, and they will learn some general strategies for addressing same.
12. Teachers will take a deep dive into decoding, and they will learn how these deficits affect students with reading disabilities, including dyslexia.
13. Teachers will explore several strategies to help struggling students become more proficient with their decoding skills.
14. Teachers will be introduced to the six types of syllables (closed, open, magic-e, vowel teams, r-controlled, and consonant +le), and they will learn a specific syllabication strategy for helping students with reading disabilities become more proficient readers.
15. Teachers will explore several strategies to help struggling students become more proficient with their syllabication skills.
16. Teachers will explore the skills needed to successfully encode language, and they will learn how deficits in this area can impact students with reading and writing disabilities, including dysgraphia.
17. Teachers will understand how working memory deficits affect students’ writing skills, and they will explore several strategies to help them more easily teach encoding to their students.
18. Teachers will learn specific strategies to strengthen students’ oral language skills as a means to expand their writing skills.
19. Teachers will explore a variety of strategies to expand students’ writing skills from the sentence level to multi paragraphs.

20. Teachers will learn specific strategies to help struggling students expand their writing, broken down by the three initial stages of writing development — emergent, early, and fluent.
21. Teachers will explore the steps involved in breaking down a question into smaller steps so that it can be answered as an extended written response.
22. Teachers will learn how explicitly model all the steps involved in the research process so that students better understand it.
23. Teachers will learn how to break expository text into a simpler color-coded structure, which makes it easier for students with special needs to comprehend and work with.
24. Teachers will learn the basic structure for opinion writing, including how to color code it to make it easier for their students with special needs to comprehend and work with.
25. Teachers will learn how to incorporate graphic organizers, rubrics, and checklists into the opinion writing process so that it becomes easier for students with special needs to understand and work with.
26. Teachers will learn the difference between developmentally appropriate and age-appropriate activities.
27. Teachers will learn several general reading intervention strategies such as incorporating instructional read-alouds into daily practice and using a technique known as Partner Reading - Paragraph Shrinking, among others.
28. Teachers will understand what multi-sensory instruction is, and they will learn a variety of classroom strategies to incorporate this best practice into all aspects of foundational literacy.

## **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 Three Classroom Literacy Scenarios (20% of final grade)
- Culminating Practicum (20% of final grade)

## Topical Outline

### Unit One

- The Science Behind Reading and Writing
- Why Students Struggle
- A Multi-Tiered System of Supports
- **Assignment #1**  
*Write an autobiography including information about yourself, your grade level and what you specifically hope to learn about helping students with special needs become better readers and writers so that they can succeed in an inclusive K-5 classroom. Your autobiography should be a minimum of three paragraphs.*
- **Test #1**

### Unit Two

- Phonemic Awareness
- The Influence of Fluency on Reading and Writing
- Vocabulary: The Key to Unlocking Comprehension
- **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

- Diving Deep into Decoding
- Syllables
- Encoding
- **Assignment #3**  
*Online Discussion Board Participation/Engagement: Please post a tip, strategy, or idea that specifically relates to helping students with special needs become better readers and writers so that they can succeed in an inclusive K-5 classroom. The tip, strategy, or idea that you share needs to 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 follow easily. 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**

- The Reading-Writing Connection
- Expanding Students' Writing Skills
- Extended Written Response
- **Test #4**

#### **Unit Five**

- Expository Text with Research
- Expository Text without Research
- Opinion Writing
- **Test #5**

#### **Unit Six**

- Using Developmentally Appropriate Activities
- Reading Interventions for Struggling Students
- An Overview of Multi-Sensory Instruction
- **Assignment #4**

*Review the classroom literacy scenarios and respond to three of them. Applying what you have learned from this course, what can the teacher do in each of these fictitious scenarios to scaffold his/her literacy instruction so that each student's individual needs can be best met? Each response should consist of a minimum of two paragraphs with the first paragraph clearly stating where the difficulty lies (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and/or writing). The second paragraph should explore at least one specific strategy or intervention that can be used to address the fictitious student's literacy deficit. The second paragraph should also discuss how the chosen strategy/intervention is expected to benefit the learning outcome for the given learner. One of the responses needs to include a multi-sensory approach as well. The strategies and interventions you choose must be different from one another, meaning that you cannot use a particular literacy strategy more than once within each of your three paragraphs. When you are finished with this assignment, you will have written a total of six paragraphs.*

- **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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