



Professional Development Institute

Flex Course Syllabus

Helping Middle Grade Struggling Writers Achieve Success (3-6)

PDI Course Number: 19T02

UCSD Course Number: EDUC41574

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 students who cringe every time you assign a writing task and wish you knew ways to help them? Writing is hard work, especially for the student who struggles. This online course is designed for teachers in grades 3-6 who want to help their struggling students with key writing skills. The course begins with a brief discussion of why students may struggle with writing as well as an exploration of writing standards. Then, several root causes of writing avoidance are shared. Teachers will learn how to differentiate between struggling writers and those who are learning disabled so appropriate remediations can be selected. Information on the writing process is shared together with suggestions for incorporating specific writing strategies such as the six traits and writing across the curriculum. Teachers will also learn how to motivate their struggling writers so they become more interested and focused on the process. The strong connection between reading and writing will be explored. Additional strategies such as writer's workshop, technology that promotes writing, and using quality literature as an inspiration for writing are shared. Finally, writing assessment is fully explored. By the end of this course, teachers will more fully understand how to best help their struggling writers.

Educational Outcomes

1. Teachers will understand the basics of the Common Core Writing Standards.
2. Teachers will understand the fundamental causes of writing avoidance and will learn specific strategies for dealing with same.
3. Teachers will learn the warning signs of a writing disability.
4. Teachers will learn how to differentiate their instruction to best suit the needs of their struggling writers.
5. Teachers will learn about the importance of creating a collaborative working environment within their classroom and specific strategies to accomplish same.
6. Teachers will learn specific strategies for motivating students to write.
7. Teachers will learn specific strategies to make writing meaningful for their struggling writers.
8. Teachers will learn all the steps of the writing process.
9. Teachers will learn specific strategies for every stage of the writing process.
10. Teachers will have a basic understanding of the six traits of writing in addition to learning strategies to help their struggling writers.
11. Teachers will have an appreciation for and will learn the importance of the reading-writing connection.
12. Teachers will learn how to use literature as an example and inspiration for writing.
13. Teachers will learn the basic mechanics of the writer's workshop.
14. Teachers will have an appreciation for and will learn the importance of writing in all content areas.
15. Teachers will learn specific strategies for helping their struggling writers in content area classes.
16. Teachers will learn various release models in order to give back the responsibility of writing to their students.
17. Teachers will learn three types of assessments and the differences among them.
18. Teachers will discover ways to assess their students' writing.
19. Teachers will discover ways to incorporate technology into their writing programs in order to help and inspire their struggling students.

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: Writing Lesson Activities (20% of final grade)
- Culminating Practicum (20% of final grade)

Topical Outline

Unit One

- Why Johnny Can't Write: A Brief History of Writing
- Writing Standards - What? There Were Standards?
- The Shift to Common Core State Standards
- **Assignment #1**
Write an autobiography including information about yourself, your grade level and what you specifically hope to learn about helping struggling writers. Your autobiography should be a minimum of three paragraphs.
- **Test #1**

Unit Two

- Root Causes of Writing Avoidance
- Struggling or learning disabled?
- Differentiation is Key
- **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

- Creating Learning Communities Within Your Classroom
- Motivating Your Struggling Writers
- Every Piece Needs a Purpose: Tips to Make Writing Meaningful for Your Students

- Writing = Risk: How to Foster Bravery and Stamina When Writing
- **Assignment #3**
Online Discussion Board Participation/Engagement: Please post a tip, strategy, or idea that specifically relates to helping struggling writers 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

- Understanding the Writing Process
- The Six Traits of Writing
- **Test #4**

Unit Five

- The Reading-Writing Connection
- Using Literature to Teach Writing
- Writer's Workshop
- **Test #5**

Unit Six

- Writing Across the Curriculum
- The Gradual Release of Responsibility
- Assessing Student Writing
- **Assignment #4**
Create a writing activity for each of the six traits. At least two of the activities must be tied to a piece of literature. Post a detailed description of each of the activities (note which trait each is for) as well as the title, author, and publisher of the literature books you chose for at least two of the activities. Each activity description should be a minimum of five sentences. In addition, create a four-point analytic rubric for one of the activities. Keep in mind that this assignment is a cumulative project and therefore, you are expected to demonstrate the knowledge you gained from the course and your ability to apply what you have learned in a practical setting.
- **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.

Bibliography

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