Professional Development Institute

Flex Course Syllabus

Mastering the Text Complexity Challenge in Grades 4-8

PDI Course Number: 46T02

UCSD Course Number: EDUC41603

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

Are you struggling to help your students master text complexity for your grade level? This online course is designed for teachers of grades four through eight who are interested in learning the best practices for helping their students master text complexity. This course begins with an overview of standards for ELA, literature, and informational texts. Teachers will learn strategies for assessing text complexity, asking and answering text-dependent questions, using textual evidence, teaching important standards-related and vocabulary building strategies. An emphasis is placed upon strategies and techniques for helping students learn how to read both narrative and information texts closely. Text exemplars are shared along with specific tools for analyzing texts. Teachers will also learn questioning techniques specific for students who struggle. Teachers will learn the importance of building vocabulary, as well as the vocabulary self-correction strategy to assist students in comprehending complex text. Finally, teachers will learn strategies for helping students explore theme and author's message in a variety of genres. By the end of this course, teachers will be better prepared to help their students understand and master text complexity.

Educational Objectives

1. Teachers will have a better understanding of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts.
2. Teachers will learn how to help students with the transition to the rigorous requirements of the Common Core State Standards.
3. Teachers will learn how to manage their curriculum such that reading can be integrated into all content areas.
4. Teachers will learn about text complexity and how to analyze texts for levels of complexity.
5. Teachers will become familiar with text exemplars
6. Teachers will learn the concept of close reading and its benefits.
7. Teachers will learn strategies for incorporating close reading practices into the classroom.
8. Teachers will learn how to level texts and appropriately assign texts based on reading ability.
9. Teachers will learn how to help students build important vocabulary skills.
10. Teachers will understand the role writing has in improving reading skills and how to use writing to develop students' reading.
11. Teachers will learn how to teach students to ask and answer questions with evidence.
12. Teachers will learn important strategies for teaching questioning techniques to struggling readers.
13. Teachers will learn critical strategies for differentiating instruction through leveling texts.
14. Teachers will gain a detailed understanding of disciplinary literacy and content integration.
15. Teachers will learn techniques for teaching theme and author's message.
16. Teachers will learn strategies for teaching genre, and gain valuable activities to use with students.

Instructional Media

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

Evaluation

- Quiz #1 (5% of final grade)
- Quiz #2 (5% of final grade)

- Quiz #3 (5% of final grade)
- Quiz #4 (5% of final grade)
- Quiz #5 (5% of final grade)
- Autobiography and Goals for the Course (10% of final grade)
- Article Reflection (15% of final grade)
- Course Collaboration/Share Ideas with the Class (10% of final grade)
- Develop Text-Dependent Questions, Vocabulary Lists, and Close Strategy for Two Texts or Chapters (20% of final grade)
- Culminating Practicum (20% of final grade)

Topical Outline

Unit One

- Overview of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts
- Standards for Literature
- Standards for Informational Text
- Balancing Types of Texts
- **Assignment #1**
  Write an autobiography including information about yourself, your grade level and what you specifically hope to learn in this course. Your autobiography should be a minimum of three paragraphs.
- **Quiz #1**

Unit Two

- Overview of Text Complexity
- Text Exemplars and Other Tools for Analyzing Texts
- Leveled Texts
- **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 that is relevant to the specific course content. Read the article and then write an essay with your thoughts.
- **Quiz #2**

Unit Three

- Asking and Answering Questions with Evidence
- Questioning Techniques to Help Readers Who Struggle
- Overview of Disciplinary Literacy and Content Integration
- **Assignment # 3**

Please post a tip, strategy, or idea that specifically relates to the content of this course and will make a difference to other teachers in their own classrooms. Your assignment should be a minimum of three paragraphs.

- **Quiz #3**

Unit Four

- Overview of Close Reading
- Close Reading with Literature
- Close Reading with Informational Texts
- **Quiz #4**

Unit Five

- Building Vocabulary
- Vocabulary Self-Collection
- Writing with Reading in Mind
- **Quiz #5**

Unit Six

- Understanding and Working with Theme and Author's Message
- Exploring Genre
- Resources for Reading in Grades 4-8
- **Assignment #4**
  Choose two books or two chapters that you will soon be introducing to your class. For __each__ of the two books, complete the following.
    o *Name and author of the book or titles of the textbook chapters.*
    o *Locate a minimum of ten tier II vocabulary words. Note the page numbers you found these words on.*
    o *Choose one concept for students to focus on as part of a close reading of the text and explain the reasoning for your choice in a minimum of five sentences.*
    o *Write a minimum of two questions for each of the six types of text-dependent questions as identified by Douglas Fisher. They are provided below for your convenience.*
- **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

The Professional Development Institute wishes to thank the NGA Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Offices for their generous public license of the Common Core State Standards.

Akhondi, M., Malayeri, F., & Samad, A. (2013). How to Teach Expository Text Structure to Facilitate Reading Comprehension. Retrieved from http://www.readingrockets.org/article/how-teach-expository-text-structure-facilitate-reading-comprehension

Alberta Education. (2007). Primary Programs Framework for Teaching and Learning. Retrieved from https://education.alberta.ca/media/563580/guidingprinc2007.pdf

Allington, R. (2002). You Can't Learn Much from Books You Can't Read. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/nov02/vol60/num03/You-Can't-Learn-Much-from-Books-You-Can't-Read.aspx

Allington, R. L., & Gabriel, R. E. (2012, March). Every child, every day. Educational Leadership, 69(6), 10-15. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar12/vol69/num06/Every-Child,-Every-Day.aspx

Beck, I., & McKeown, M. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York: Guilford Press.

Beers, K. (2003). *When kids can't read, what teachers can do: A guide for teachers, 6-12*. Portsmouth: Heinemann.

Blackburn. (2012). *Rigor Is NOT a Four-Letter Word*. New York: Routledge.

Boyles, N. (2012). Closing in on Close Reading. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/dec12/vol70/num04/Closing-in-on-Close-Reading.aspx

Bransford, J, & Johnson, K. (1972). Contextual Prerequisites for Understanding Some Investigations of Comprehension and Recall. Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior, 11, p. 26.

Brown, S. (2015). How to Read a Math Book. Retrieved from http://brownmath.com/stfa/read.htm

Buehl, D. (2008). *Classroom strategies for interactive learning* (3rd ed.). International Reading Association.

Clausen-Grace, N., & Kelley, M. (2010). Guiding Students Through Expository Text with Text Feature Walks. Retrieved from http://www.ldonline.org/article/Guiding_Students_Through_Expository_Text_with_Text_Feature_Walks?theme=print

Connell, G. (2013). Investigating Nonfiction Part 2: Digging Deeper With Close Reading | Scholastic.com. Retrieved from http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/top-teaching/2013/04/investigating-nonfiction-part-2-digging-deeper-close-reading

Curriculum Integration. (2007). From https://education.alberta.ca/media/563580/guidingprinc2007.pdf
Dalporto, D. (2015). WeAreTeachers: Writing Across the Curriculum: What, How and Why. Retrieved from http://www.weareteachers.com/blogs/post/2015/04/03/writing-across-the-curriculum-what-how-and-why

Fisher, D. & Frey, N. (2008). Text Complexity. Retrieved from http://www.nassp.org/tabid/3788/default.aspx?topic=Instructional_Leader_0112

Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2013). Text-Dependent Questions. Retrieved from http://www.nassp.org/tabid/3788/default.aspx?topic=Instructional_Leader_0912

Fisher, D. (2008). Effective Use of the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model. Retrieved from https://www.mheonline.com/_treasures/pdf/douglas_fisher.pdf

Fountas, I., & Pinnell, G. (2012). *Genre study: Teaching with fiction and nonfiction books: Grades K-8*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Frank, C., Grossi, J., & Stanfield, D. (2006). *Applications of reading strategies within the classroom: Explanations, models, and teacher templates for content areas in grades 3-12*. Boston: Pearson Allyn and Bacon.

Gerwertz, C. (2010). Writing Can Improve Reading Skill, Study Finds. Retrieved from http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/curriculum/2010/04/writing_can_improve_reading_sk.html

Goodwin, K. & Miller, B. (2012). Nonfiction Reading Promotes Student Success. Retrieved from http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/dec12/vol70/num04/Nonfiction-Reading-Promotes-Student-Success.aspx

Graham, S., and Hebert, M. A. (2010). Writing to read: Evidence for how writing can improve reading. A Carnegie Corporation Time to Act Report. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education. - See more at: http://www.reading.org/literacy-daily/research/post/lrp/2013/10/21/writing-to-read-evidence-for-how-writing-can-improve-reading#sthash.ruDhND9A.dpuf

Kelley, M. J. and Clausen-Grace, N. (2010), Guiding Students Through Expository Text With Text Feature Walks. The Reading Teacher, 64: 191-195. doi: 10.1598/RT.64.3.4

Kenney, J. (2005). *Literacy strategies for improving mathematics instruction*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lapp, D. & Flood, J. (1994). Integrating the Curriculum: First steps. *The Reading Teacher*, 47(5), 416-419.

Liben, M., & Liben, D. (2013). Complete Guide to Creating Text-Dependent Questions. Retrieved August 5, 2015, from http://achievethecore.org/page/46/complete-guide-to-creating-text-dependent-questions

Marzano, R., & Pickering, D. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

McEwan, E. (2015). Root Words, Roots and Affixes. Retrieved from http://www.readingrockets.org/article/root-words-roots-and-affixes

Platt. (2013). 3 Reasons to Celebrate the Common Core State Standards, and 3 to Be Cautious. Retrieved December 21, 2014, from http://www.weteachwelearn.org/2013/02/3-reasons-to-celebrate-the-common-core-state-standards-and-3-to-be-cautious/

Platt, R. (2013). Don't Throw Out Your Leveled Libraries Yet! Text Complexity and Helping Students Learn to Pick "Just-Right" Books. Retrieved from http://www.weteachwelearn.org/2013/02/a-cautionary-tale-dont-throw-out-your-leveled-libraries-yet-text-complexity-and-helping-students-learn-to-pick-just-right-books/

Platt. (2014). Zealous Supporters and Detractors of the Common Core State Standards are Both Wrong. Retrieved December 21, 2014, from http://www.weteachwelearn.org/2014/08/why-zealous-supporters-and-detractors-of-the-common-core-state-standards-are-fighting-the-wrong-fight/

Platt, R. (2015). High/Low Books to Engage Reluctant Readers in from 4th Grade Through High School. Retrieved from http://www.weteachwelearn.org/2015/07/highlow-books-to-engage-reluctant-readers-from-4th-grade-through-high-school/

Platt, R., & Wolfe, J. (2013). Two-Column Notes: The Twin Pillars Supporting Reading and Writing of Non-Fiction Texts. Retrieved from http://www.weteachwelearn.org/2012/02/two-column-notes-the-twin-pillars-supporting-reading-and-writing-of-non-fiction-texts/

Rickards, D., & Hawes, S. (2006). Connecting Reading and Writing Through Author's Craft. *The Reading Teacher, 60*(4), 370-373. doi:10.1598/RT.60.4.6

Rigor and the Common Core State Standards. (2014, January 1). Retrieved December 21, 2014, from http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/rigor-and-common-core-state-standards.shtml

Shanahan, T., & Shanahan, C. (2008). Teaching Disciplinary Literacy to Adolescents: Rethinking Content- Area Literacy. *Harvard Educational Review, 78*(1), 40-59. doi:10.17763

Sprenger. (2013). *Teaching the Critical Vocabulary of the Common Core 55 Words that Make or Break Student Understanding*. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD.

Stack, L. (2014). *Execution is the strategy: How leaders achieve maximum results in minimum time*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
Tovani, C. (2000). *I read it, but I don't get it: Comprehension strategies for adolescent readers*. Portland: Stenhouse.

Wulber, A. (2010). Darke County CCSS Learning Targets. Retrieved from http://www.darke.k12.oh.us/curriculum/la/7th grade learning targets.pdf