

# **RDLA 152: An Introduction to Underlying Principles and Research for Effective Literacy Instruction Course Syllabus**

## **Title**

An Introduction to Underlying Principles and Research for Effective Literacy Instruction (Grades Pre K-8)

## **Target Audience**

This course is intended for pre-service and in-service teachers of grades PreK-8.

## **Prerequisites**

There are no prerequisites for this course.

## **Course Description**

This course focuses on the fundamental principles that inform research-based literacy and reading instruction. These principles provide the foundation for past federal policies such as No-Child-Left-Behind and for more recent and current state and federal policies such as the Every Student Succeeds Act. It is designed to give educators an overview of the relationships among phonemic awareness, phonics, word recognition, vocabulary, and fluency. Learners study the developmental stages through which young children gain independence in the use of phonemic awareness, phonics, and word recognition, as well as the increasing levels of complex skills required for students to increase their vocabulary and comprehension skills in grades K–8. Learners will also explore the literacy needs of English language learners (ELL), students with learning disabilities, and other struggling readers. As a final task, learners will create a two-week literacy plan for their classrooms. Upon completion of this course, learners will have a strong foundation of research-based literacy instruction methods and activities to draw from as they transform their teaching practices to meet the specific needs of their students, the curricular goals of their school district, and their state standards.

## **Instructor/Facilitator**

See instructor/facilitator sheet

## **Credits**

To be determined by college or university

## **Goals**

At the end of this course, learners will understand:

- The role of research and English Language Arts standards in making decisions about effective literacy instruction.
- How to use strategies for meeting the needs of students who have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (such as special education students, English Language Learners (ELL), and students from low-income environments) and students who struggle to become proficient readers.
- Concepts related to phonemic awareness, phonological awareness, fluency, spelling, writing, vocabulary development, and comprehension.
- Developmental stages of phonemic awareness and phonological awareness.
- The relationship between phonological awareness and fluency.
- Research-based comprehension strategies.

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- Concepts related to motivation and learning to read and write.
- Concepts related to self-regulation of literacy skills.

## **Learner Outcomes (performance based)**

Learners completing this course will be able to:

- Discuss and explain the role of research in making decisions about effective literacy instruction for students in Grades Pre K-8.
- Design phonics, phonemic-awareness, or concept-of-print instructional activities for a specific group of students. Cite research to justify choice of activities.
- Discuss the possible causes of fluency problems, evaluate the effectiveness of activities to increase fluency, and identify adaptations to these activities to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles.
- Describe a multidimensional developmental view of reading comprehension and create a multidimensional vocabulary lesson that includes active processing.
- Discuss instructional approaches that combine direct instruction with student-centered activities for the purpose of developing self-regulated, motivated students.
- Articulate transformations in your teaching practices by creating a two-week literacy plan.

## **Outline of Content and Assignments**

This course is divided into six sessions:

- Session 1: Early Literacy Instruction
- Session 2: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics
- Session 3: Fluency
- Session 4: Vocabulary and Comprehension
- Session 5: Motivating Readers and Writers
- Session 6: Planning Future Literacy Instruction

Each session includes readings, videos, interactive activities, journal reflections, and discussion questions. Work through the sessions in order. The end of each session contains a self-assessment. Each session will provide opportunities to plan and prepare for work on the final project. Instructions for the final project are found in Session 6. In lieu of the final project, alternative projects are offered at the end of Sessions 2, 4, and 6 and are based on topics learned in the preceding sessions. There is a “Prior Knowledge” section at the beginning of each session. Learners should use this prompt to think about their current practices and their understandings of the topic for each session. Learners should use the questions in this section to determine how their understanding and practices have been changed or adjusted as a result of working through the session activities. Both of these sections are for personal reflection and will not be evaluated by the facilitator.

This course is aligned with ISTE standards, NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts, and NCTE standards. Key concepts are presented with the purpose of improving content knowledge, teaching pedagogy, and enhancing student achievement. Assignments will draw upon your knowledge of classroom practice and with interactions with students of various ability levels and learning styles.



**Session 1: Early Literacy Instruction**

Learners will:

- Define professional goals and expectations for this course.
- Explain prior knowledge about how federal legislation and standards impact literacy education.
- Use course readings to discuss and explain the role of research in making decisions about effective literacy instruction for students in grades Pre K–8.
- Given an example of standards-based instruction, discuss whether or not the standards are appropriate for students in grades Pre K-8 and the differences that need to be addressed relative to the students' ages and developmental backgrounds.
- Formulate specific changes they would make to their teaching practice when applying English Language Arts standards and research-based reading instruction criteria and methods.

Read

- "What Is Evidence-Based Reading Instruction?"  
This reading discusses how scientifically based research reflects issues related to teaching and learning in our classrooms.
- "Standards for the English Language Arts"  
This reading presents the national English Language Arts standards.
- "Where We Stand on Learning to Read and Write"  
This reading provides foundational insights regarding learning at the earliest stages.
- "Reading and Reading Instruction for Children from Low-Income and Non-English Speaking Households."  
This article presents two explanations for the reading difficulties of children after third grade.
- Vocabulary Development  
This reading from Colorín Colorado provides strategies and resources for improving vocabulary development in ELLS.

Complete activities and assignments

- View the video, "Character Analysis: Small Group Discussion," which presents a small group discussion among third-grade students as they analyze aspects of characterization and the author's craft.
- Complete Session 1 Self-Assessment.

Write in online journal

- Analyze their own expectations for this course by setting professional goals.
- Analyze their prior knowledge of this topic by generating specific questions about this topic.
- Write about the English Language Arts standards that are demonstrated by the students in the video. Consider whether the standards are appropriate for students in grades K-8.
- Think about the role your state standards play in literacy instruction, how they guide your reading curriculum, and changes you might make to your current or future teaching practices to help students meet or exceed the standards.

Participate in an online discussion: Understanding Early Literacy Research

- Introduce themselves to other learners
- Discuss the following questions:
  - Based upon the reading and your experiences, what would you consider to be the most important research-based factors in helping students develop



- literacy?
- What implications do these factors have for instruction as students' progress through the grades?
  - Provide a concrete example from your experiences to support at least one of your responses.
- Incorporate the needs of students with diverse backgrounds and learning styles into the discussion about the research-based factors that are important for developing literacy and the impact these factors have on instruction.

**Session 2: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics**

Learners will:

- Discuss the implications of federal legislation on literacy education and their role in achieving federal literacy goals.
- Reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of inventive spelling in reading and writing development.
- Identify and discuss adaptations to the Making Words - Word Patterns Interactive to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles.
- Design a phonics, phonemic-awareness, or concept-of-print instructional activity for a specific group of students, using activity models provided in this session.
- Develop a list of expectations for student knowledge of phonemic awareness and phonics for a specific group of students and provide a rationale from research justifying their expectations (Alternative Project 1).

Read

- “Concepts of Print, Letter Naming, and Phonemic Awareness”  
This reading explores how the concepts of print, letter naming, and phonemic awareness support early literacy development and presents instructional practices that promote the acquisition of these skills.
- “Concepts, Sounds, and the ABCs: A Diet for a Very Young Reader”  
This reading examines key features of early literacy development.
- The Pals Program.
- “Key Areas of Instruction: Phonics”
- “Key Areas of Instruction: Phonemic Awareness”  
These readings from the PBS Kids show, “Between the Lions” provide recommendations for instruction and video vignettes.
- “Supporting Phonemic Awareness Development in the Classroom”  
This reading expands on the key features of early literacy development.
- “Everything You Wanted to Know About Phonics (But Were Afraid to Ask)”  
This reading describes criteria for effective phonics instruction.
- “Differentiated Instruction: Providing the Right Kind of Reading Support at the Right Time” This reading provides information to help the classroom teacher support reading for struggling readers.

Complete activities and assignments

- Explore the Decoding Activity interactive from Misunderstood Minds.
- Complete the interactive, Making Words—Letters and Sounds, to understand how making words is a common activity for building knowledge about letters and sounds.
- Complete the interactive, Making Words—Word Patterns, to help students learn letter/sound relationships by working with word patterns.
- Complete the Phonics Strategy Assignment.
- Complete Session 2 Self-Assessment.
- If they choose to do the alternative projects rather than the final project, learners will now complete Alternative Project 1: Performance Expectations for Phonemic Awareness and Phonics.

Write in online journal

- Reflect on the following:
  - Consider the relationships between use of phonics, inventive spelling, and the development of phonemic awareness, metalinguistic awareness, and other print concepts.



Participate in online discussion: Understanding the Role of Phonemic Awareness

- Answer the following questions:

Do the implications for federal legislation (which focuses on topics such as phonemic awareness, letter naming, and concepts of print) affect the entire K-8 curricula, or only that of the early grades?

What is your role and responsibility in achieving this federal goal?

- Look back at their discussion board responses. Now that their understanding of phonics instruction has developed, learners will reconsider their initial responses and describe how the activities presented may be adapted to meet the needs of older students or students with diverse learning styles.

**Session 3: Fluency**

Learners will:

- Discuss the possible causes for fluency problems in K-8 students and describe intervention strategies to improve fluency.
- Given examples of fluency instruction, discuss the effectiveness of the activities and identify adaptations necessary to meet the needs of students with diverse learning styles.
- Reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of encouraging students to read at a faster rate and which students might benefit from fluency instruction.
- Implement a reading fluency technique with a student and reflect on the experience.

Read

- “Key Areas of Instruction: Fluency”  
This reading from the PBS Kids show, “Between the Lions” provides recommendations and g fluency.
- "Why Reading Fluency Should Be Hot!"  
This reading discusses the significance of automaticity and prosody.
- “Re-mediating Reading Difficulties: Appraising the Past, Reconciling the Present, Constructing the Future”  
This reading will help you to identify reading difficulties and instructional interventions that prevent, as well as support, struggling readers.
- Target the Problem! Fluency  
This online reading from Reading Rockets provides different examples of fluency problems from the student’s, parent’s and educator’s perspectives.
- “I Never Thought I Could Be a Star: A Readers’ Theatre Ticket to Fluency”  
The authors of this reading describe how to use Readers’ Theatre to promote fluency.
- "Fluency Beyond the Primary Grades: From Group Performance to Silent, Independent Reading."
- “Reader’s Theater: Giving Students a Reason to Read Aloud”  
This online article from Reading Rockets discusses the benefits of Reader’s Theater and also includes tips for how to find and use different scripts with students.

Complete activities and assignments

- View the video, “Echo Reading and Fluency,” which shows a teacher and a fourth-grade student using echo reading as a strategy to build fluency.
- Complete Modeling Fluency Assignment
- Complete Session 3 Self-Assessment.

Write in online journal

- Reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of encouraging students to read at a faster rate.

Participate in online discussion: Developing Fluent Readers



- Respond to the following: Describe students you have encountered who have difficulty with reading fluency and discuss possible causes. Justify your statements by referring to the readings and examples from your professional practice.
- Add to your previous discussion board response by providing your thoughts on the pros and cons of using echo reading and other fluency activities with students at your grade level.

**Session 4: Vocabulary and Comprehension**

Learners will:

- Explain and reflect on the development of reading comprehension and the use of critical thinking discussions across grade levels.
- Use course readings to discuss and assess the multidimensional, developmental view of comprehension and its application to classroom instruction.
- Evaluate and discuss the roles of: vocabulary instruction in developing comprehension; the instructional approaches for developing comprehension; and vocabulary instruction using information provided in course readings.
- Create a file of vocabulary activities, each of which uses an active processing approach.
- Analyze state and national standards and describe the instructional implications of meeting the standards (Alternative Project2).

Read

- "Toward an Understanding of the Development of Reading Comprehension: Instruction across the Grade Levels"  
The author’s perspective expands traditional views of comprehension development and instruction.
- "Socio-Constructivist and Political View on Teachers' Implementation of Two Types of Reading Comprehension Approaches in Low-Income Schools"  
This article examines the results of instruction through a socio-constructivist perspective.
- "Toward an Understanding of the Development of Reading and Instruction Across the Grade Levels"
- "Key Areas of Instruction: Vocabulary"  
This short reading from the PBS Kids show, "Between the Lions" provides recommendations for reading instruction and video vignettes.
- "Teaching Vocabulary Across the Curriculum"  
The article describes how vocabulary instruction may be integrated into a reading program.

Complete activities and assignments

- Revisit the video from Session 1, "Character Analysis: Small Group Discussion." After viewing the video from Session 1 and recalling the discussion board responses of their peers, learners will think about the following questions:
  - How do student-led discussions develop critical thinking?
  - What is the role of the teacher in fostering conversations and social interactions of this type?
- View examples from the "Between the Lions" show.
- Watch "The Modified Frayer Model: Vocabulary Instruction."
- Complete the Word Pairs interactive. The goal of this activity is to help students develop a deeper understanding of words by thinking about the relationship between two words.
- Complete the Vocabulary Instruction assignment to create a list of activities that use active processing approaches for instruction.
- Complete Session 4 Self-Assessment.
- If they have chosen to do the alternative projects rather than the final project, learners will complete Alternative Project 2: Vocabulary Standards and Instructional Implications.

Write in online journal

- Critique the instructional approach modeled in the video, "Character Analysis: Small Group Discussion."
- Consider how they might implement a multidimensional, developmental approach in their current or future curriculum.



Participate in online discussion: Comprehension Development and Instruction

- Discuss the following questions:
  - What are the advantages and disadvantages of a multidimensional, developmental view of comprehension for K–2 students?
  - How might this differ for students in Grades 3–8?
- Consider the role of vocabulary instruction in developing comprehension. Add to the conversation by discussing the value of engaging students in learning new concepts through "active processing" versus traditional approaches, such as using the dictionary, memorizing definitions, and reading a text and answering questions on a worksheet.

**Session 5: Motivating Readers and Writers**

Learners will:

- Use course readings to identify and discuss instructional approaches that combine direct instruction with student-centered activities for the purpose of developing self-regulated, motivated learners.
- Reflect on how educators can turn reluctant readers and writers into self-driven, intrinsically motivated students and what suggestions from course readings may assist in the process.

Read

- “Authentic Literacy Activities for Developing Comprehension and Writing”  
This article defines authenticity and promotes authentic literacy activities.
- “Text Comprehension”  
This online reading describes different reading comprehension strategies and how they may be implemented in the classroom.
- Supporting a Strategic Stance in the Classroom: A Comprehensive Framework for Helping Teachers Help Students Be Strategic”  
This article shows how to include strategic instruction in literature discussions.
- “When Kids Hate to Read”  
This online article is directed towards parents of reluctant readers.
- “Motivating Readers: Helping Students Set and Attain Personal Reading Goals”. This article argues for the value of students' setting personal reading goals.
- "Teacher Practices that Impact Reading Motivation" from Reading Rockets
- “Reading Comprehension: Asking the Right Questions”  
This article proposes the use of open-ended and multiply interpreted questions.

Complete activities and assignments

- View the video, “Strategy Instruction and Self-regulation of Literacy Skills,” in which a teacher and first-grade students are engaged in guided reading, a strategy for self-monitoring comprehension.
- Complete the Prediction Activity.
- Complete Session 5 Self-Assessment.

Write in online journal

- Reflect on the following questions:
  - How can you turn reluctant readers and writers into self-driven, intrinsically motivated students?
  - Which suggestions for “Motivating Reluctant Readers and Writers” have you found successful with your students or believe might have potential?

- If you are not currently teaching, which suggestions would you like to implement in your future classroom?

Participate in online discussion: Developing Strategic Readers

- Discuss instructional challenges of developing strategic readers and ways that you could scaffold instruction to provide experiences that develop strategic reading.

**Session 6: Planning Future Literacy Instruction**

Learners will:

- Using the knowledge gained through course readings, interactives, discussions, and videos, design a two-week literacy plan appropriate for the needs of classroom students.
- Articulate a rationale for instructional changes incorporated into their two-week lesson plan.
- Provide feedback on two literacy plans by engaging in a peer review activity on the discussion board.
- Access learning in this course by comparing prior knowledge and acquired knowledge.
- Analyze the learning experience in this course by reflecting on their professional goals and expectations.
- Envision and create an ideal school day for a student who is participating in a research-based literacy program (Alternative Project3).

Read

- “Balanced Literacy Instruction: Addressing Issues of Equity” (not required)

Complete activities and assignments

- If they have chosen to do the alternative projects rather than the final project, learners will complete Alternative Project 3: Literacy Log
- If they have chosen to do the final project, complete the Final Project assignments outlined below.

Online journal assignments

- Reflect on the following questions:
  - What have you learned and what skills have you acquired from the course?
  - Identify the essential ideas and strategies you gained from this course and how you plan to incorporate them into your current or future classroom.
  - How does this learning experience compare with your goals and expectations?
  - Were there any professional goals you were unable to achieve? Why?
  - How do you plan to address these areas of professional development in the future?

**Final Project: Planning Future Literacy Instruction—Transforming Practices for Your School and District**

Learners will follow these instructions to complete their final projects:

Decide on one instructional change that you would like to make, such as more emphasis on comprehension strategies, vocabulary, or phonics instruction; or changing your classroom culture to foster students’ motivation to read and write. Devise a plan for implementing the new practices and ways to integrate the plan with your existing/future school or district curriculum. Describe your students’ specific needs and how the instructional changes will benefit all students and influence the school or district curriculum.

Your specific task is to write a final report and design a two-week literacy lesson plan. You are expected to use what you have learned throughout Sessions 1-5. Use APA format for citations and to document references. Your final report should be about 700-750 words in length. Refer to the final project assessment rubric before you begin.

Go to the discussion board and share your lesson plan with your fellow learners, who will provide constructive feedback. You will also review and provide feedback to their lesson plan.

## **Schedule**

This course is scheduled to take approximately 45 hours to complete readings, activities, video, assignments, reflections, and a final project.

## **Requirements**

Learners are expected to:

- Complete all assignments
- Maintain an online journal
- Participate at least once each week in discussion boards
- Ask for assistance when they need it

## **Materials (hardware, software, plug-ins)**

Technical Requirements:

- Word processor
- Internet service provider
- E-mail

## **Academic Dishonesty Policy**

To be inserted by university institution only

## **Evaluation**

This course can be taken for graduate credit on a pass/fail basis, or for a letter grade and graduate credit. See graduate credit details pertaining to specific graduate credit institutions.

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