

Thinkport Online Course Syllabus

Title

Teaching Phonemic Awareness and Phonics: A Window into Exemplary Instruction

Target Audience

Grades K --- 3

Prerequisites

To successfully complete this course, participants should have:

- At least one year of experience teaching students in Preschool to Grade 3.

Course Description

This course is truly for the practitioner who is not only interested in learning about how to help children cross the bridge from oral language to fully evolved literacy, but also for those who are willing to turn the lens on their own instruction with the mindset of reflection and refinement. In this facilitated, you will fine tune your understanding of the reciprocal relationship between phonemic awareness and phonics, and the role that both play in children’s accurate and rapid word---solving, behaviors that serve as cornerstones of future reading success. You will read evidence---based descriptions of recommended instructional practices. You will analyze and respond to classroom scenarios. Through required readings, and lectures, you will gain insight into teaching strategies that support children’s development of both phonemic awareness and phonics. Via video, you will step into the classrooms of various teachers to watch as they encounter “problems of the practice.” You will have the chance to construct your own ideas of what went wrong, make connections to what you have learned, and describe how you might address this problem in your own teaching routines. Over the course of six sessions, you will also explore with fidelity the role of trustworthy assessment in informing our instructional decisions; you will learn to distinguish between intervention and remediation; you will get to examine multimodal text sets and evaluate them as teaching resources; and you will look closely at factors which engage students in reading right from the start.

Instructor/Facilitator

See instructor/facilitator sheet.

Course Authors

This course was developed in partnership with the Boston University School of Education.

Boston University

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- Alicia Poulin, Grade 1 Teacher

Why Is This Course Important to Early Childhood Teachers? From the Authors' introduction:

"As teachers of children in kindergarten to second grade, getting youngsters off to the "right start" in reading and writing may be our greatest responsibility. This is because there is very strong evidence that children's early reading success is fundamentally important to long-term success in school. Studies tell us that children's reading achievement at the end of first grade predicts their overall school achievement in grade 11 (e.g., Cunningham and Stanovich, 1997)! Each time I reread this finding I am reminded of the truly awesome responsibility we have as early childhood teachers.

As is often the case, though, when the stakes are very high, we have an inclination to look for a single answer-----sometimes we think of it as a "silver bullet"-----to guide us as we plan and deliver instruction that we hope will result in children's development of a rich foundation for lifelong learning. In literacy, instruction of phonemic awareness and phonics is often perceived in this way----- as the single and most--assured "pathway" to early and later reading success. Unfortunately, it is not quite so simple.

Here's what we know. Phonemic awareness is fundamental to phonics; and, in turn, phonics enables both accurate and rapid word---solving-----what we often refer to as automatic word reading. The ability to recognize words automatically or with minimal effort allows readers to focus all of their attention on making sense of what they are reading and in that way early success with word solving also contributes to comprehension. As such, it can make a long---term difference in children's reading achievement over time.

But, in fact, skillful phonemic awareness and phonics do not develop in isolation. Rather, we have strong and trustworthy research evidence that tells us that there is a strong and persistent relationship between the development of phonemic awareness and broad language knowledge----- especially vocabulary. Simply put, the greater children's vocabulary knowledge, the greater their phonemic awareness. Moreover, in the same way that first---grade reading success predicts achievement much later in school, vocabulary knowledge in kindergarten predicts children's reading comprehension in grades 3 and beyond (e.g., Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2002)!

So, what does all of this mean? In a nutshell, although we may not have discovered a "silver bullet," we do have lots of trustworthy evidence about factors that contribute to successful reading and writing in both the early and later school years; and we also have collected a good deal of information about ways highly---effective teachers translate research findings to sound and engaging practices that make a difference for all of the children in their classrooms. At its foundation, we know that as teachers we need to know, understand, and act on the evidence related to all of the domains necessary to become a successful reader, and that we cannot depend on one domain to get us where we need to be.

In this course, our goal and our intention is to work together to develop a full and deep understanding of how highly effective teachers act on the evidence to prepare children for long---term success in reading and writing. We have developed this course to do so in ways that you will find engaging and energizing; and we hope that, together, we will grow our understanding and our practices such that as children enter our classrooms each and every day, they do so looking forward to every opportunity to read, write, and learn together!"

Goals

The goal of this course is to help early childhood educators prepare children for long-term success in reading and writing, and to develop a full and deep understanding of how highly effective teachers act on the evidence to support literacy development for all students.

Course Summary

Throughout the course, participants will analyze and respond to classroom scenarios, watch lectures outlining key ideas, read brief, evidence-based descriptions of recommended teaching practices, and visit classrooms via video to observe teaching practices in action and listen as teachers discuss their approach to literacy instruction. Course projects include evaluation and selection of traditional and digital resources about habitats to use in a classroom and a final reflection tying course ideas together.

1. This course is grounded in evidence-based teaching of reading with a focus on the full range of knowledge young children need to grow into engaged and successful readers and writers. It emphasizes the use of interdisciplinary, multimodal texts and providing children a coherent literacy and language curriculum so that every reading act not only “grows” the skills they need to become capable readers in the early grades, but also contributes to a deep well of knowledge that they will need to sustain capable reading in the later grades.
2. The connected learning approach to learning emphasizes:
 - a. explicit, systematic teaching of phonemic awareness and phonics.
 - b. assessment intended both to monitor and improve children’s reading.
 - c. a classroom context that is intentionally shaped to engage youngsters in reading enjoyment and for information right from the start.
 - d. providing opportunities for young children to read and respond to interesting, linguistically and cognitively challenging texts.
 - e. using digital devices (e.g., tablets, computers, interactive whiteboards) and digital resources that align with youngsters interests and familiar “ways of being” and also connect learners to each other.
 - f. learning across the disciplines (i.e., science, literacy, math) that are taught in early childhood and elementary school classrooms.
3. Multimodal “text sets” serve as learning resources. These include:
 - a. Informational and fictional texts
 - b. PBS Kids digital games, videos, and apps
4. Classroom videos are used to exemplify the recommended teaching practices and make the ideas “come alive” for course participants.
5. Each of the six sessions is expected to require approximately 7 ½ hours to complete (45 hours total). Participants are expected to complete one session per week over a six-week period.

6. Participants demonstrate learning outcomes in six ways:
 - a. Online Journal Responses
 - b. Discussion Forum Responses
 - c. Analyzing and Adding to Multimodal Text Sets
 - d. Analyzing Classroom Scenarios
 - e. Quizzes
 - f. Final Project

Expected Learning Outcomes

By successfully completing all course requirements participants will:

1. Understand the ways language provides a foundation for word learning.
2. Understand that explicit instruction supports development of word study abilities.
3. Implement teaching strategies that support children's development of phonemic awareness.
4. Implement teaching strategies that support children's development of phonics and their ability to decode monosyllabic and multisyllabic words.
5. Implement teaching strategies that support the development of word study abilities among children who find word solving difficult.
6. Understand that texts that convey information through wordless modes such as images, sound, movement, or layout also require a type of "decoding" that must be explicitly taught.
7. Implement teaching strategies that support decoding of multimodal texts.
8. Implement assessment strategies that monitor children's learning of each day's lesson and inform ongoing instruction.
9. Create a classroom context and daily teaching routines that support children's active word learning and support a disposition toward all reading that begins and ends with the process of meaning--making.

Sequence of Study

Session 1: What Do We Know About Oral Language And Learning To Read?

- a. What IS oral language knowledge?
- b. What do we know about oral language and learning to read?
- c. What should teachers know and do?

Session 2: What is Phonemic Awareness, Why Is It Important, and How Do I Teach It?

- a. What is it and why is it important to early literacy?
- b. How does phonological awareness develop?
- c. How types of language experiences contribute to the development of phonemic awareness?

- d. What should teachers do?

Session 3: Teaching Phonics: What Should Teachers Know and Do?

- a. What is it and why does it matter?
- b. What is the content and learning progression of phonics knowledge?
- c. What are different approaches to phonics instruction?
- d. What specific teaching strategies support children's development of phonics and their ability to decode monosyllabic and multisyllabic words?

Session 4: Supporting Children Who Find Word---Solving Difficult

- a. Patterns of Reading Difficulty
- b. Intervention vs. Remediation
- c. Characteristics of Effective Early Intervention
- d. What Teaching Actions Should Teachers Take?

Session 5: Assessing Children's Word---Solving Abilities

- a. What does trustworthy assessment look like?
- b. What are the types and purposes of assessment?
- c. What must teachers know how to do?
- d. Measures to assess phonological and phonemic awareness and phonics
- e. Cautions about common assessment practices

Session 6: Engaging Children in Reading Right from the Start

- a. What factors contribute to engaged reading?
- b. What teaching actions provide a foundation for engaged reading?

Schedule

This course is scheduled to take approximately 45 hours to complete. Each of the six sessions is expected to require approximately 7.5 hours to complete (45 hours total). Participants are expected to complete one session per week over a six---week period.

The number of hours identified for each course reflects time spent online, but does not reflect the total time spent completing offline coursework and assignments. All learners are different and learners will likely spend double the indicated number of hours completing all coursework depending on learning styles and work habits.

Requirements

Learners are expected to:

- Complete all assignments.
- Participate and actively engage in discussions with fellow learners while contributing to the social construction of knowledge.
- Be self---directed and self---motivated.

- Ask for assistance when they need it.

Course Materials

Required Readings

In each session participants will read two to four articles from professional journals focused on key topics and instructional practices. Articles are provided as downloadable PDFs free of cost, accessed through links provided on the course pages.

Videos

In each session participants will view videos of a teacher implementing focal strategies in a classroom. Videos are linked at point of use.

Text Sets

Successful completion of the baseline task and final project requires access to high-quality children's texts. Depending on their interest, participants will select a text set for kindergarten or second grade. They may purchase the texts sets at a book store of their choice or obtain them from a local library. Several are available online.

Materials (hardware, software, plug-ins)

Technical Requirements

- Word processor
- Internet service provider
- E-mail

Evaluation

This course is evaluated on a letter grade basis.