TheConnectingLink

Strategic Literacy:
Topics in Writing K-8
Online Syllabus

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an overview of and foundation for writing including current research components and practice. Participants of this course will examine current writing research, study classroom pedagogy, and explore critical writing components as they apply to the 21ˢᵗ century classroom. Foundational work will include studying the spectrum of writing development as well as learning to use mentor texts in the writing process. Participants will examine teaching strategies to enhance specific genres of writing and develop sound assessment in both formative and summative measure.   Participants will evaluate a classroom culture of writing as well as implement and reflect on their own current practice.

Course Prerequisites

This course is recommended for K-8 teachers, paraprofessionals, tutors, or resource professionals who would like to improve their understanding and foundational knowledge of writing and the implementation of this information to create strong K-8 learning situations and, in turn, writers.

System Requirements

- Computer with word processing software
- Internet access connection

Text Books/Supplemental Reading

There is not a required textbook for this class. However, refer to weekly reading assignments and additional materials within each milestone.
Educators in MA should refer to http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/0311.pdf for a review of Pre-K to 12 standards for their state.

Global Goals of the Course

To deepen and/or apply the content and skills of the teacher's existing professional knowledge base by meeting the following global goals of this course:

1. To understand the philosophical and pedagogical belief systems of writing in relationship to the development of literacy (NBPTS 2,4; ISTE 5)

2. To develop an understanding of the continuum of writing development (NBPTS 2,3; ISTE 1,5)
3. To explore current writing research and apply it to the development of a sound curriculum of writing (NBPTS 1,2,4,5; ISTE 1,2,3,4)
4. To analyze writing in a mentor text viewpoint and develop appropriate writing assignments with such knowledge (NBPTS 2,3,4; ISTE 3,5)
5. To acknowledge and respect the importance of risk-taking and play in the writers' process (NBPTS 1,2,3; ISTE 1,3,5)
6. To examine specific genres of writing and adjust teaching methods to enhance each (NBPTS 2,3,4; ISTE 2,3)
7. To gain knowledge of the assessment process, utilizing the formative assessment process to guide instruction (NBPTS 1,2,3,4,5; ISTE 2,5)
8. To gain knowledge of the assessment process in order to complete accurate summative assessment (NBPTS 2,3,4,5; ISTE 2,3,5)
9. To analyze the ways in which writing is changing in the digital age and adjust practice to maximize student modalities and 21st century needs (NBPTS 1,2,4; ISTE 1,2,3,4,5)

Instructional Objectives

By the conclusion of the course, each participant should be able to do the following:

1. Develop a framework of sound writing instruction
   - 1.1 Reflect on one's own experiences with writing and how these affect (both positively and negatively) the process of teaching writing
   - 1.2 Scrutinize current professional belief statements and approaches to writing from collective groups of professionals compared to that of current research
   - 1.3 Read current research and position papers and differentiate appropriate practices for classroom application
2. Recognize the link between student writing success and the classroom environment
   - 2.1 Identify aspects of the physical classroom environment that both help and hinder the creative process
   - 2.2 Recognize and respect the importance of risk-taking and play in the writer's process of idea building
   - 2.3 Learn how student confidence and motivation are affected by the student's external and internal environment
3. Create a writing atmosphere that differentiates for all writers
   - 3.1 Learn and understand the developmental continuum of writing
   - 3.2 Explore individual approaches to different writing tasks
   - 3.3 Apply formative assessment strategies to guide instructional planning
4. Analyze how writers grow by producing writing in different genres
   - 4.1 Recognize and differentiate between different modes of writing

4.2 Construct free-writing exercises, including poetry, to create foundations of expression

4.3 Construct models of the teaching of story writing

    4.3.1 Explore of the approaches of authors in story-telling mode

    4.3.2 Gain knowledge of the author's development of characters, settings, and plots

    4.3.3 Develop lessons in story-writing with a focus on the elements of a story

4.4 Construct models of the teaching of expository and persuasive writing

    4.4.1 Understand the significance of purposes and audiences of writing

    4.4.2 Recognize and differentiate organizational structures according to purpose

    4.4.3 Develop strategies to craft compelling arguments

    4.4.4 Develop strategies to teach aspects of support and elaboration

    4.4.5 Analyze how voice, sentence structure, and word choice contribute to a piece of writing

4.5 Construct models of digital writing

    4.5.1 Analyze the parallels between visual and word-based writing

    4.5.2 Develop lessons that allow multiple modalities to be showcased in digital form including visual digital storytelling and online writing in both casual and formal measure

5. Provide a basis of explicit writing instruction

    5.1 Understand the role of teacher modeling in the instructional process

    5.2 Deconstruct genres of writing for specific traits

    5.3 Develop mini-lessons for specific revision sessions in each genre of writing

6. Learn assessment methods to aid in the process of writing

    6.1 Recognize the importance of formative assessment measures in creating a baseline developmental level

    6.2 Respect the need for validation and valuation of writers' strengths in order to remediate weaknesses

    6.3 Utilize summative measurement tools to evaluate overall student products

Teaching Methodology and Delivery Model

Teaching methodologies used in this course are specifically designed to maximize learning in a guided, graduate-level, online distance-learning model. Each course

facilitator is trained and/or experienced in facilitating graduate-level online courses as well as the specific content and skills of this course.

1. Online methodologies include instructor/expert presentations, directed skill practice, asynchronous class and group discussions using threaded discussion questions, peer evaluation, self-evaluation, portfolio development, and the synthesis of new knowledge and skills in designing grade-specific lesson plans or other educational applications of knowledge and skills.

2. The course is taught in a supportive learning environment with teacher-participant interaction and feedback. Class participants interact with other professionals via the Forum area by replying to existing posts as well as creating new threads on topics of their choice.

3. Content focuses on the presentation of advanced concepts linked to instructional strategies which accommodate learning needs of a diverse student population.

4. Course content, activities, and assignments are organized into "milestones" that participants complete during the 8-week span of the course. Course content is intended to cover material equal to 45 seat hours of instructional time.

5. Class participants actively construct their own learning and make it personally relevant by acquiring and applying course knowledge/skills to their own teaching situation.

Learning Assessment

Formative assessment of learning objectives for this course is conducted informally throughout the course via discussion, critiques, peer- and self-evaluations, journal entries, instructor feedback, small-group sharing and activities requiring participants to make sense of new knowledge and/or skills within their realm of teaching. Additionally, three formative assessments are embedded within the course. Summative assessment for the course occurs in the form of a final project which requires each participant to synthesize class content and apply it within the teacher's specific teaching environment. Copies of the course performance assessment rubrics are included in Appendices A-C.

Compliance with National Board of Professional Teaching Standards

The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards represents the highest level of professional achievement in the continuum of teacher professional development. There are five core principles (standards) which cover five aspects of professional educational practice: (1) commitment to students and their learning, (2) knowledge of subject matter and instructional strategies, (3) management and monitoring of student learning, (4) systematic reflection about the teaching profession to learn and grow from experience, and (5) collaborative participation in the educational learning community.

Compliance with Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) Standards

The Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium's work is guided by one basic premise: An effective teacher must be able to integrate content knowledge with the specific strengths and needs of students to assure that all students learn and

perform at high levels. All teachers should meet the following standards: (1) learner development, (2) learning differences, (3) learning environments, (4) content knowledge, (5) application of content, (6) assessment, (7) planning for instruction, (8) instructional strategies, (9) professional learning and ethical practices, and (10) leadership and collaboration.

Compliance with ISTE Standards for Technology in Education

Effective teachers model and apply the National Educational Technology Standards for Students as they design, implement, and assess learning experiences to engage students and improve learning; enrich professional practice; and provide positive models for students, colleagues, and the community. All teachers should meet the following standards: (1) facilitate and inspire student learning and creativity (2) design and develop digital-age learning experiences and assessments (3) model digital-age work and learning (4) promote and model digital citizenship and responsibility (5) engage in professional growth and leadership.

Final Projects

Participants taking courses for professional development unit (not-for-credit) must follow the same Participation Expectations as posted in the course syllabus. Participants will complete readings and tasks as outlined in the Task List. Forum Postings are also required. However, participants will be exempt from completing the Formative and Summative assignments unless otherwise noted. Proof of seat hours will be presented to the participants after completing the state required course evaluation located on the student portal.

In keeping with best instructional and assessment practices, this course requires participants to demonstrate synthesis and application of course knowledge in an applied final project linked to the instructional objectives of this course. Assessment of the project should not be limited to the quantity of work submitted but should carefully consider the quality and intellectual value of the work.

Final projects are due and will be submitted to the instructor within the 8 weeks of the allotted class time. Unless the instructor states otherwise, all papers are expected to be properly formatted electronically.

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Assessment and Grading

Throughout the course, participants will engage in both formal and informal formative and summative assessments. Points are assigned based on a four-point criterion rubric specifically delineated for each assessment that can be further defined as follows:

Distinguished: The assessment is highly imaginative; demonstrates critical thought; is unique; shows substantial application to one's own teaching or professional position; *goes above and beyond requirements;* is creative; demonstrates both breadth and depth of knowledge of transition-related subject matter; shows individual's personality; is professional in presentation and appearance; and demonstrates considerable effort. The assessment is exceptionally completed and demonstrates clear understanding of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Distinguished" on the course rubric.

Proficient: The assessment is well-organized and complete; is effectively and clearly presented; demonstrates clear understandings; applies what has been learned to the author's own classroom situation; clearly shows connections; is detailed; and is thoughtful and supported with ideas. A thoroughly completed assessment demonstrates that the participant shows awareness of the tasks, gives explanations, and shows how the assessment applies to a teaching/learning situation. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Proficient" on the course rubric.

Basic: This is the lowest passing grade. The assessment meets minimum requirements; includes general information but lacks descriptive detail; shows limited application to teaching/learning; and lacks originality. This denotes work that does not meet **all** aspects of standards for academic performance in a graduate-level course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Basic" on the course rubric.

Unsatisfactory: The assessment is missing evidence or information; is sloppy and poorly organized; demonstrates only surface understandings; shows no evidence of application to the author's own teaching situation; is poorly written; and does not meet minimum standards for academic performance in a graduate-level course. The assessment meets the specific criteria delineated in "Unsatisfactory" on the course rubric.

The assessments for this course are weighted as follows:

Participation and Reflection	30%
Formative Assessments	30%
Summative Assessments	40%

Academic Honesty and Integrity

All participants are expected to maintain academic honesty and integrity by doing their own work to the best of their ability. Academic dishonesty (cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, etc.) will result in the participant receiving a zero for that assignment or paper.

Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance

In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and The Americans with Disabilities Act, participants who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, which might affect their ability to perform in this class, are encouraged to inform the instructor at the beginning of the first session. Reasonable academic accommodations, aids, and adjustments may be made as needed to provide for equitable participation.

Attendance

Participants will have 8 weeks from the time of their first date of login to complete the course. They will need to contact The Connecting Link at (888) 550-5465 should they not be able to complete the online class in the time given.

Late Work and Make-Up Policy

Participants are expected to keep pace with assignments and expectations. If a situation arises in which an assignment cannot be completed, the participant is expected to make arrangements with the instructor for the timely submission of such work. Failure to complete all work in this time frame will result in an **incomplete** or a grade of **F** for the work, depending on the reason for the delay.

University Compliance

Course content and instruction are bound by policies associated with the university granting academic credit for the course. Such polices include, but are not limited to: academic integrity and honor codes, institutional objectives and grade grievance procedures. These policies are located within the official academic catalogs which can be accessed through the university's official website.