



**Strategic Literacy:  
Topics in Writing K-8  
Site-based Participant 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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 processes in both formative and summative measure. Participants will evaluate a classroom culture of writing as well as implement and reflect on their own current practices.

**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**

Will be provided on the first day of class.

**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 explore current writing research in order to understand the philosophical and pedagogical belief systems of writing in relationship to the development of literacy and apply it to the development of a sound curriculum (NBPTS 1,2,4, 5; ISTE 1,2,3,4, 5)
2. To develop an understanding of the continuum of writing development (NBPTS 2,3; ISTE 1,5)

3. To analyze writing in a mentor text viewpoint and develop appropriate writing assignments for specific genres with such knowledge (NBPTS 2,3,4; ISTE 2,3,5)
4. To acknowledge and respect the importance of risk-taking and play in the writer's process (NBPTS 1,2,3; ISTE 1,3,5)
5. To gain knowledge of the assessment process, utilizing the formative assessment process to guide instruction and summative assessment process to gain understanding of student learning (NBPTS 1,2,3,4,5; ISTE 2,3,5)
6. To analyze the ways in which writing is changing in the digital age and adjust practice to maximize student modalities and 21<sup>st</sup> 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 storytelling mode

- 4.3.2 Gain knowledge of the author's development of characters, setting, and plot
- 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 strong 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 particular 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 a writer's strengths in order to remediate weaknesses
  - 6.3 Utilize summative measurement tools to evaluate overall student products

### Teaching Methodology and Delivery Model

Content and instructor focus are on improvement of course participant expertise through the development of knowledge and skills related to transition planning and associated concepts.

1. Methodologies include instructor presentations, specific skill practice, discussions, audio-visual presentations, self-evaluation, project development, course readings, research/inquiry exercises, and the

synthesis of new knowledge and skills with previously acquired skills/expertise in relation to transition knowledge and content.

2. The course is taught with instructor-participant and participant-participant feedback. Course content, activities, and assignments are organized into segments totaling 45 seat hours. Final projects are due within the two-week period immediately following class meetings.
3. Research-based content, presentations, and assignments are supported by textbooks and additional readings/handouts designed specifically for education professionals, educator resources in print and on the Internet, notes from instructor presentations, class activity work pages, and references.
4. Daily activities include a variety of research-based instructional approaches appropriate for adult learners. Class participants actively construct their own learning and make it personally relevant by acquiring and applying course knowledge/skills during hands-on practice and problem-solving activities, personal reflection, in-class presentations, whole-class discussions and activities, assigned readings, research/inquiry, projects, and collaborative work in various group formats. All are designed to make it possible for teachers and other transition-related personnel across the entire spectrum to learn the same basic content and skills with an emphasis on application to their own specific content area or grade level.

### **Learning Assessment**

Formative assessment of learning objectives for this course is conducted informally throughout the week via discussion, critiques, peer- and self-evaluations, journal entries, verbal and written instructor feedback, small-group sharing, and activities requiring the 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.

### **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 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.

### **Topics Agenda**

#### **Topic One: Introduction to the Course: Using Research to Understand Belief Systems and Philosophies of Writing**

Discussion of course expectations and assignment overview; examination of one's own attitudes toward writing and the teaching of writing; history of writing/teaching of writing; study of Professional Standards in the Teaching of Writing, including that of NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) and Common Core Standards; research into best practice, including Six Traits Model. (Project One)

#### **Topic Two: Creating a Writing-Safe Atmosphere: Harnessing the Importance of Creativity, Play, and Story in Narrative Writing and Poetry**

Creation of a physical environment conducive to writing including emotional and instructional safety systems; role of free-write and journaling; importance of valuing assessments, specific feedback, and praise; recognition of the need for risk-taking and play in writing; examination of the purpose of poetry including the importance of word play, development of theme, sentence fluency, and word choice as vehicles for meaning; role of grammar and punctuation in writing; use of oral storytelling as a starting point for writers; finding and developing activities for creative story development; crafting a story with the elements of fiction including characterization, plot development, and point of view

#### **Topic Three: Using Mentor Texts and the Revision Process as a Model of Teaching Exposition and Persuasion**

Deconstruction of texts for aspects of "good writing" in various genres; creation of an atmosphere of revision; finding models and mentor text for particular mini-lessons; developing the language of deconstruction with student writers; studying organizational patterns of expository and persuasive text; strategies for elaborative technique; strategies for developing sound logic and argument; importance of sentence fluency, voice, and word choice in expository and persuasive writing (Project Two)

#### **Topic Four: Creating Sound Systems for Growth and Assessment**

Investigation into various continuums of writing development, including pre-K/early elementary-aged writers; examination and evaluation of the writing spectrum overall; discussion of the importance of multiple measures to create a baseline; identification of developmental level based on a portfolio of work; use of a continuum to plan future student lessons; use of formative assessment to drive instruction; identification of ways to create portfolios including working vs. showcase portfolios; use of a developmental continuum to create individualized learning goals; “grading” on growth; place for summative assessment; recognition of peaks and valleys; development and use of rubrics in assessment of writing; practice assessment (Project Three)

#### **Topic Five: The New Age: Digital Writing and Our Future Classroom**

Examination of literacy development and the role of environment; the role of visualization in the 21<sup>st</sup> century student; identification of types of digital writing and their parallels with paper/pencil tasks; creation of digitally based assignments/synthesis of Topics 1-5 culminating in a final literacy project including reflection, application, and future planning (Final Project)

#### **Final Projects**

Assignments/ assessments should reflect that each participant is accountable for a high degree of learning; thus, an appropriate combination of group and individual assignments/assessments that can accurately determine an individual’s achievement level is required.

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 within two weeks of the end of class. Projects submitted during the third week “grace period” will have their grade reduced one full letter grade. No papers will be accepted past the grace period, and participants will, consequently, forfeit credit for the course. Papers are expected to be properly formatted and submitted to the instructor either in person or via mail or an email attachment.

Participants taking professional development unit (not-for-credit) courses must attend all scheduled class sessions and complete all in-class work. However, they will be exempt from completing the written paper and the final project requirement unless otherwise noted. Proof of seat hours will be presented to the participants after completing course reflection via the student portal and all hours are met.

## 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%



Letter grades are based on 100 points possible and assigned based on the university grading scale.

### 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 are required to attend all classes as well as participate in class discussions, small group activities, and projects. Absence from any part of the class will require that you withdraw from the class. You will need to contact The Connecting Link at (888) 550-5465 in the event this occurs.

### Emergency Statement

In the event of an emergency declared by the college or by The Connecting Link, we reserve the right to alter course plans and the attendance policy. In the event of an emergency, TCL will contact the instructor/participants with alternative educational plans for the course.

### Late Work and Make-Up Policy

Participants are expected to keep pace with in-class assignments and evening at-home assignments. 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. All work is due not later than two weeks after the class ends. 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 policies 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.

For Valparaiso University Graduate School Student Learning Objectives please visit: [www.valpo.edu/gradschool](http://www.valpo.edu/gradschool)