

**GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Course**

EDCI 555: Literacy Teaching and Learning in Diverse Elementary Classrooms, Part I  
Fall 2010  
Section 002 – 3 credits

**Meeting Time**

Wednesday 7:20-10:00  
Fairfax – Innovation Hall, room 204

**Instructor Information**

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**Course Description**

This course is one of a pair of courses that provide a research-based introduction to literacy teaching and learning for children in grades K-6. The emphasis of the first course is language development, components of learning to read, and reading instruction. The second course focuses on types of text and writing instruction. Field experience is required. Prerequisites: admission to the program, EDCI 542, and EDCI 543.

**Relationship to Program Goals and Professional Organizations**

This course addresses priorities in the GSE master plan including literacy, technology, and diversity. It is designed as an integral component of the new Elementary Program for teachers of grades PK-6, and meets new state and national guidelines and standards including Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC); International Society for Technology in Education, (ISTE); and International Reading Association (IRA) Standards for Literacy Professionals and Paraprofessionals. This course will build closely upon themes taught in the first two elementary program courses and will integrate ideas from other elementary methods courses.

**Student Outcomes**

1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of reading as a cognitive, sociocultural, psychological, and linguistic process.
2. Students will reflect on their own literacy learning histories and connect these to current theories of reading instruction.
3. Students will observe and assess the reading development and needs of elementary learners.
4. Students will plan literacy lessons that demonstrate an understanding of connections between phonemic awareness, word recognition, fluency and comprehension strategies and proficient reading.
5. Students will plan literacy lessons that promote creative and critical thinking.
6. Students will plan lessons that facilitate reading fluency, reading comprehension and vocabulary development across content areas.
7. Students will plan lessons using strategies in literal, interpretive, critical, and evaluative comprehension.
8. Students will survey technological tools, print materials, and other resources for teaching reading.
9. Students will describe the literacy needs of diverse learners, including English Language Learners and students with other special needs, and they will adapt lesson plans to meet these needs.
10. Students will explore and explain the role of families, communities, and schools in children's literacy learning.
11. Students will understand the importance of promoting independent reading and reading reflectively by selecting quality literature, including fiction and non-fiction, at appropriate reading levels.
12. Students will demonstrate the ability to assess individual and group reading needs in a classroom situation and organize classroom instruction to facilitate the literacy development of all learners.

**Nature of Course Delivery**

This course includes multiple instructional strategies. Individual session formats will vary and may include lecture, small group/ large group discussion, hands-on, interactive work, student presentations, and cooperative learning. Practical applications of theory will be explored via fieldwork.

**IRA Standards**

1. Foundational Knowledge
2. Instructional Strategies and Curriculum Materials
3. Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation
4. Creating a Literate Environment
5. Professional Development

## INTASC Core Standards

1. The teacher understand the **central concepts**, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.
2. The teacher understands **how children learn and develop**, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.
3. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to **diverse learners**.
4. The teacher understands and uses a **variety of instructional strategies** to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
5. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group **motivation** and behavior to create a learning environment encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
6. The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media **communication** techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
7. The teacher **plans** instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
8. The teacher understand and uses formal and informal **assessment** strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.
9. The teacher is a **reflective practitioner** who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professional in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.

## Mason Mission Statement

George Mason University will be an institution of international academic reputation providing a superior education enabling students to develop critical, analytical, and imaginative thinking and to make well founded ethical decisions. It will respond to the call for interdisciplinary research and teaching not simply by adding programs but by rethinking the traditional structure of the academy.

The University will prepare students to address the complex issues facing them in society and to discover meaning in their own lives. It will encourage diversity in its student body and will meet the needs of students by providing them with undergraduate, graduate, and professional courses of study that are interdisciplinary and innovative. The University will energetically seek ways to interact with and serve the needs of the student body.

The University will nurture and support a faculty that is diverse, innovative and excellent in teaching, active in pure and applied research, and responsive to the needs of students and the community. The faculty will embody the University's interactive approach to change both in the academy and in the world. The University will be a resource of the

Commonwealth of Virginia serving private and public sectors and will be an intellectual and cultural nexus between Northern Virginia, the nation, and the world. (Adopted January 1991)

### College of Education and Human Development Statement of Expectations

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions. See [www.gse.gmu.edu](http://www.gse.gmu.edu) for a listing of these dispositions.
- Students must follow the guidelines of the **University Honor Code**:

*To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: **Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.***

- Students must agree to abide by the university policy for **Responsible Use of Computing**. See <http://mail.gmu.edu> and click on Responsible Use of Computing at the bottom of the screen.
- Mason strives to comply fully with the **Americans with Disabilities Act**. Students requesting accommodations based on disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, [www.gmu.edu/student/drc](http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc), located at SUB 1 Room 222, phone (703) 993-4306.

### Required Texts

Bear, D. R., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. R. (2007). *Words their way: Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling instruction* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Fountas, I. C. & Pinnell, G. S. (1996). *Guided reading*. NH: Heinemann. **(F & P)**

Zarrillo, J. (2007). *Are you prepared to teach reading? A practical tool for self-assessment*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement. (2008). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Jessup, MD: National Institute for Literacy. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO BUY THIS BOOK – I WILL GIVE YOU A COPY (NIFL)**

## Recommended Texts

- Allington, R. L. (2005). *What really matters for struggling readers: Designing research-based programs* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon
- Duffy, G. G. (2003). *Explaining reading: A resource for teaching concepts, skills, and strategies*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Gambrell, L. B., Morrow, L. M., & Pressley, M. (2007). *Best practices in literacy instruction* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Guilford Press.
- Miller, D. (2002). *Reading with meaning: Teaching comprehension in the primary grades*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

## Assignments

### 1. Participation (15%)

This class will be interactive, involving much dialogue and active participation. You are expected to participate in a professional manner in all facets of class. This portion of the grade also includes small assignments completed in class.

### 2. Reflections on fieldwork – Due 12/1 (10%)

Each time you observe, you will write a ~½ page, reflecting on your field experiences related to literacy. What types of literacy instruction are you seeing? How are the students responding? What are students learning? What is particularly effective? What does not seem to be effective? How does it relate to what you are learning in this class?

### 3. Children's literature log – Due 12/15 (10%)

It is vital that teachers have an extensive knowledge of children's literature, so they can effectively match students with books that are interesting to the child, of high quality, and at the appropriate level. To begin building this knowledge, you are expected to read a number of children's books on different topics, at various levels, and from different genres (fiction, informational, picture books, multicultural books, poetry, etc.) as part of this course. To document the children's books you read, create a log of the books you read. On the log list (a) the title, (b) the author, (c) the genre, (d) the approximate level (typical grade level or other leveling system can be found online), (e) a short (1-3 sentences) summary of the book, and (f) 1-2 brief ideas describing how the book might be used in your classroom. Feel free to be creative in how you keep this log. You will be graded on the accuracy of the information presented and on the amount and variety of reading you do.

4. Spelling inventory – Due 10/20 (15%)

Spelling inventories are extremely informative assessments that are easy to implement. They provide the teacher important information about students' language development. For this assignment, you will conduct a spelling inventory in your internship classroom. With the students' spelling inventories, you will complete a **Feature Guide** for each student, a **Spelling-by-Stage Classroom Organization Chart**, and a **Classroom Composite**. Using this information, you will put students in word study groups, explaining the primary need of each group and the instruction you would use to meet this need. You will turn in the feature guides, the classroom organization chart, the classroom composite, the groups with explanations of your grouping and instructional decisions. **I WILL EXPLAIN AND MODEL ALL OF THESE IN CLASS.**

5. Strategic read-aloud – Due 10/27-plan; 11/10-conduct; 11/17-reflection (15%)

Reading aloud is a staple of every elementary classroom and should occur daily. Conducting a strategic read aloud is an effective way for showing students how good readers think while they read. Therefore, strategic read-alouds are at the heart of comprehension instruction. You will conduct a strategic read aloud in our class, explicitly explaining to “students” (your colleagues) a comprehension strategy and then modeling the strategy to students by thinking aloud as you read the book. You will turn in a lesson plan before you conduct the read aloud, and after conducting the read aloud you will turn in the lesson plan and a reflection. The reflection should discuss what went well with the lesson and things to improve upon. **I WILL EXPLAIN AND MODEL A STRATEGIC READ ALOUD IN CLASS.**

6. Informal Reading Inventory – Due 12/8 (15%)

An informal reading inventory is an assessment that provides a snapshot of students' reading level. Knowing students' reading levels is vital to matching students with texts. These inventories provide information about the students' word recognition, fluency, and comprehension. In your internship, you will conduct an informal reading inventory with one student. You will turn in the “data” you collect on the student's (a) word recognition in isolation, (b) word recognition in context, (c) fluency, and (d) comprehension. You will also turn in a document that outlines (a) the students' reading level, (b) the types of instruction you would use with this student in light of the results, (c) the texts you would use in the instruction, and (d) a reflection on the process of conducting an informal reading inventory. **I WILL EXPLAIN AND MODEL AN INFORMAL READING INVENTORY IN CLASS.**

## 7. Final – Vision Statement – Due 9/22 AND 12/15 (20%)

The best teachers are passionate about teaching, and they know *why* they are passionate. That is, they can articulate a vision for what they are trying to do in their instruction and what impact they want to have on their students.

You will submit two versions of your vision during the course. The first will be shared with colleagues in draft form in class and will be due to the instructor on September 23. This first version will describe your vision for teaching. Think about: Why you want to teach? What are you passionate about? The first vision statement should not exceed three pages.

You will begin independently revising your vision based on new learning, continued reading of professional sources, consultation with colleagues, and additional personal reflection. However, the revised vision will also address the tasks, activities, and experiences you will implement in your classroom that will help you achieve your vision.

As you revise your vision, you will share it with colleagues periodically during the course. A final version will be due to the instructor on December 16. This final vision statement should not exceed five pages.

The instructor will evaluate both versions of the vision statement in terms of how well you justify your position (i.e., how well you bring readings and knowledge to bear in building a thoughtful and defensible rationales for what you say you stand for). Your vision itself will not be evaluated (it is personal to you, and what you say you stand for is your business). Instead, the evaluation will focus on *why* you hold that vision and how you justify your position. And in the second draft, *why* certain tasks, activities and/or experiences are likely to lead your kids to the vision you have for them.

### Grading Scale

A = 100-94  
A- = 93-90  
B+ = 89-86  
B = 85-80

C+ = 79-76  
C = 75-70  
D = 69-65  
F = below 65

## Class Schedule

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### Class 1 – 9/1/09

- Introductions
- Syllabus
- What do you know about literacy instruction?
- Importance of early reading instruction
- Introduce 5 Pillars and Balanced Literacy
- Overview of course

Readings for next week: Zarrillo chs. 1 & 3

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### Class 2 – 9/8/09

- Language development
  - o Alphabetic principle
  - o Concepts of print
  - o Shared reading
  - o Literate environment
  - o Morning meeting/message

Readings for next week: Zarrillo chs. 4 & 5, NIFL pp. i-17

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### Class 3 – 9/15/09

- **BRING DRAFT OF VISIONING PAPER TO SHARE WITH GROUP**
- Word recognition
  - o Phonological awareness
  - o Phonemic awareness
  - o Phonics
  - o Sight words
  - o Decoding
  - o Word walls

Readings for next week: WTW chs. 1 & 2, Zarrillo ch. 7

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**Class 4 – 9/22/09**

- **1<sup>st</sup> DRAFT OF VISIONING PAPER DUE**
- Spelling
  - o Relationship to reading
  - o Spelling Inventory
  - o Stages of spelling development

Reading for next week: WTW ch. 3, and one other selected ch. from WTW (stage)

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**Class 5 – 9/29/09**

- Word Study
  - o Organizing classroom
  - o Concept sorts, writing sorts, speed sorts
  - o Games

Readings for next week: Zarrillo ch. 9, NIFL pp. 29-39

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**Class 6 – 10/6/09**

- Vocabulary
  - o Tiers
  - o Wide reading
  - o Word consciousness
  - o Individual words
  - o Graphic organizers
  - o Structural analysis
  - o Word banks

Readings for next week: Zarrillo ch. 6, NIFL pp. 19-27

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**Class 7 – 10/13/09**

- Fluency
  - o Wide reading
  - o Choral & Echo reading
  - o Repeated readings

Readings for next week: Zarrillo chs. 8, 10 & 11, NIFL pp. 41-48

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**Class 8 – 10/20/09**

- **SPELLING INVENTORY DUE**
- Comprehension
  - o Narrative vs. expository
  - o High-quality literature
  - o Aesthetic read alouds
  - o Before-during-after
  - o Narrative comprehension instruction
  - o Strategic read-alouds
  - o Discussion
  - o Reciprocal teaching
  - o Expository comprehension (KWL, Text structure, Vocabulary)

Readings for next week: Zarrillo chs. 2 & 16, read ahead in F & P – see class 10

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**Class 9 – 10/27/09**

- **STRATEGIC READ-ALOUD LESSON PLAN DUE**
- Assessments I
  - o Informal vs. Formal
  - o Concepts of print
  - o Retellings
  - o High-stakes tests

Readings for next week: F & P chs. 6 & 7, read ahead in F & P – see class 10

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**Class 10** – 11/3/09

- Assessments II
  - o Running records
  - o IRIs

Readings for next week: Zarrillo, ch. 15, F & P chs. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 11

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**Class 11** – 11/10/09

- **CONDUCT STRATEGIC READ-ALOUDS IN CLASS**
- Differentiated instruction
  - o Heterogeneous grouping
  - o Flexible grouping
  - o Teaching reading to ELLs and diverse learners
- Guided reading
  - o Grouping for instruction

Readings for next week: Zarrillo ch. 12, Applegate article, ACCESS article

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**Class 12** – 11/17/09

- **STRATEGIC READ-ALOUD LESSON PLAN AND REFLECTION DUE**
  - Motivation and affect
    - o Interest
    - o Choice, collaboration, authenticity
    - o Projects
    - o Literature circles
    - o Book club
    - o Themed units
    - o Teacher as model
  - Managing a balanced literacy framework
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**Class 13** – 11/24/09

- **No class (Thanksgiving holiday)**
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**Class 14** – 12/1/09

- **OBSERVATION REFLECTIONS DUE** – email them to me
  - **No class (annual meeting of the National Reading Conference)**
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**Class 15** – 12/8/09

- **IRI DUE**
  - **TBA**
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**Exam date** – 12/15/09

- **2<sup>ND</sup> VISIONING PAPER DUE**
  - **CHILDREN'S LITERATURE LOG DUE**
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\* Instructor reserves the right to adjust syllabus throughout the semester