

**REFLECTION AND INQUIRY IN TEACHING PRACTICE
TE 802/804 – LITERACY COMPONENT**

FALL/SPRING 2003-2004

COURSE OVERVIEW

Because language is closely linked to the process and product of thought, it serves to mediate virtually all learning. For this reason the importance of the development of language and literacy in children is considered the first and most fundamental responsibility of the school. It is not surprising that over the years language and literacy have been the subject of more research than any other aspect of education (Dorothy Strickland in Taylor, 1983).

Dorothy Strickland's observation is as true to day as when it was published in 1983. Language and literacy continue to be of critical importance to and the central focus of education, especially in the elementary grades. This course focuses on literacy curriculum and teaching methodology in grades K-8. Building on your undergraduate course work, you will begin to integrate your knowledge of theory and practice related to the language arts with the day-to-day experiences of your internship. In our class sessions we will examine theory about the teaching of reading and writing and current research relevant to both subjects. We will also examine specific approaches and strategies for reading and writing instruction in the classroom. Our discussions will focus on the following questions:

- What is the influence of development on children's literacy learning?
- How do teachers draw upon their knowledge and beliefs about literacy to create effective literacy programs for their students?
- How do teachers design and implement appropriate literacy learning activities to meet their goals and objectives and to actively engage students?
- How do teachers organize and manage classroom literacy instruction?
- How do teachers assess students' literacy abilities and attitudes toward the language arts in order to plan instruction and then modify those plans in order to meet individual needs?
- How do teachers assess students' literacy learning?
- How can teachers learn about their literacy instruction from their students?

Each class session will draw upon assigned readings, written assignments, and your experiences in your field placement to examine various topics and issues relevant to language arts instruction. In-class activities will be varied – lecture, whole class discussion, small group discussion, small group activities, simulated learning activities, and student presentations. You are expected to participate fully in these activities. In order to do this you must prepare for each class meeting by thoughtfully and critically reading the assigned readings and by preparing written assignments in a timely manner.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Tompkins, G. E. (2003). *Literacy for the 21st Century*, (3rd edition). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Merrill Prentice-Hall.

Weinstein, C. S., & Mignano, A. T. (2003). *Elementary Classroom Management* (3rd edition). Boston: McGraw-Hill.

Please order these texts directly from the publishers or an online bookstore.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

As described in the Team Three Handbook, this course sequence continues the teacher candidate's attainment of the Program Standards for the Michigan State University College of Education.

- Knowing subject matters and how to teach them
- Working with students
- Creating and managing a classroom learning community
- Working and learning in a school and profession

Focused on literacy and taken during the internship year, this sequence is especially intended to help you learn to do the following:

- Consolidate and sharpen your knowledge of literacy learning – development, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment
- Link knowledge about literacy to your internship in key areas, including planning instruction, curriculum, assessment, and professional roles and relationships
- Learn theory, terminology, and teaching practices in the following five areas key to helping students toward powerful literacy:
 - How language (written/oral) is learned and used
 - How language works (its nature, structure, and variations)
 - How language is learned in and out of school
 - How language is taught and language learning is assessed
 - How language supports learning of the school subjects

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS

An important aspect of the classroom learning community is active participation by students. Expectations for students in this course include:

- Attend all seminar sessions. If you are unable to be in class, please notify me BEFORE the start of class by phone or email, using the contact information I have provided. Note that there will be a penalty for unexcused absences. Excused absences include illness, family emergency, religious holiday, and formal Parent Conferences in your school.
- If you must miss a day of class, contact me as soon as possible to arrange to turn in an assignment due that day. It is your responsibility to obtain notes from the missed class from another student.
- Complete assigned readings and any related writings before class begins.
- The written work that you hand in should be quality work, both in its content and form. The content of your written work should reflect your careful and thoughtful consideration of the ideas we are exploring in the various readings and activities that we use – and you can refer to these, and by all means to prior readings and experience, where this serves to support your ideas. As teachers we need to be able to articulate reasons for what we do and justify the claims and assertions we make about children, curriculum, and teaching to our students, their parents, other teachers, and administrators. Therefore, you are expected to use descriptions (including specific quotes), examples, copies of children's writings or drawings, or vignettes to support claims that you make about a child's learning or a piece of curriculum. This does not mean you need to write pages and pages and pages for these assignments, but it does mean that you should carefully craft what you write – be clear, succinct, and specifically support what you say. Your work should be typed, double-spaced, and presented in an edited format (you have checked it for spelling and grammatical correctness).
- Turn in all assignments on time. There is a penalty for late papers unless permission has been given in advance to turn the assignment in late.

- Actively contribute to all class discussions and all study group sessions by being prepared, engaging in active learning, raising relevant questions, making contributions that promote discussion, and by eliciting the ideas of others in the class in order to enrich the discussions. An important aspect of any classroom learning community is the active engagement of students and teachers around worthwhile content. Your contributions to class discussions and activities are essential to your learning as well as to the learning of our own classroom community.

TEAM THREE ATTENDANCE POLICY

In accordance with the Teacher Preparation Program's Professional Conduct Policy, attendance and punctuality in class meetings and field experiences are critical to your success in this course and the Program. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the policy in your Student Handbook. In the case of recurring absences or tardiness, I will notify the Team Coordinator and you may be required to attend a meeting regarding your attendance. More than *2 (two) unexcused absences (absences without timely communication with the instructor, absences without compelling reasons) in class will affect your grade and may result in a final grade of 0.0 for the course.

*This means 2 unexcused absences for TE 802 , mathematics and literacy components combined, fall semester and two unexcused absences, mathematics and literacy components combined, spring semester.

From the Professional Criteria: Teacher candidates must generally have been present and on time for professional commitments, including classes and field experiences. Teacher candidates must have regularly communicated about necessary absences or lateness according to guideline in the Professional Conduct Policy. Teacher candidates must have a record of meeting deadlines for course assignments and program requirements. A pattern of repeated absences, lateness, and failure to meet deadlines in courses or fieldwork is not acceptable. Any form of dishonesty (lying, plagiarism, forged signatures, etc.) about these and other requirements is not acceptable

COURSE DESIGN

As a masters level course for working teachers, TE 801/804 does not look like an undergraduate college class. Instead it is designed to resemble high-quality professional development. As such, the sequence will challenge you to think like a teacher studying and integrating theory and practice, thinking critically about problems of practice in your teaching and gradually taking responsibility for your own learning and teaching.

In your internship you will come to know one school, community, and classroom well. In our class we will have an opportunity to get to know about the experiences of interns working in your school and in other schools and communities in Southeast Michigan as well. To take advantage of the composition of our class, we will have two kinds of learning environments at our meetings: whole class sessions where we take up topics of importance and interest to all and grade-level study groups where we work together to design lessons and units.

The accompanying grid shows how the course topics, study group activities and assignments are linked to the course goals. We will look at the fall assignments and assessments in detail on the first day of class. We will look at the spring assignments and assessments in detail on the first day of class during the spring semester.

Fall graded written assignments:

In-class writings
Draft of position statement

Spring graded written assignments:

In-class writings
Revised position statement
Integrated literature-based thematic unit (including standards/benchmarks and maps)

CLASS SESSIONS

Date	Whole class Seminar Topic	In-class Study Groups	Readings due	Assignments due
Week of 10/13	Literacy and Theory	Literacy in your School	Tompkins Ch. 1 & 2	None
Week of 10/20	Literacy Assessment	Brainstorm position paper topics	Tompkins Ch. 3	In-class writing
Week of 10/27	Beginning literacy instruction	Assessing student work samples	Tompkins Ch. 4 & 5	In-class writing
Week of 11/3	Second Guided Lead Teaching	No class		
Week of 11/10	Second Guided Lead Teaching	No Class		
Week of 11/17	Fluency and Vocabulary	Present draft position paper	Tompkins Ch. 6 & 7	In-class writing
Week of 11/24	Thanksgiving Week	No class		
Week of 12/1	Comprehension and text structure	None	Tompkins Ch. 8 & 9	Draft position paper
Week of 3/8	Integrated Thematic units	None	Tompkins Ch. 10 & Pp. 450-0457	Revised position paper
Week of 3/15	Literature circles and discussion groups	Share book(s) selected for your unit	Tompkins, Ch 11 & Weinstein Ch. 11	In-class writing Book(s) for unit
Week of 3/22	Workshop Approach	share unit benchmarks/ standards	Tompkins, Ch. 12	In-class writing Standards/benchmarks for unit
Week of 3/29	Textbooks & Content area Instruction	share map drafts	Tompkins, 13 & 14	In-class writing Draft of unit map
Week of 4/19	Putting it all Together	Present units	None	Integrated thematic unit

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

All assignments and due dates are the same for all sections of Team Three's Southeast Michigan cohort. Small group activities will be individualized and adapted to the needs and concerns of each section. You will NOT be required to teach your integrated unit in the spring. However, you will use your classroom materials and situation in designing the unit. In addition it is hoped that the unit will be useful to you in future teaching. We will facilitate sharing of the units among class members.

The course models the use of multiple forms of assessment, including in-class writings, authentic tasks and texts, and performance-based assessment. We will provide you with a set of standards to be used across all the sections when evaluating the draft position statement, the final position statement, the in-class writings, and the unit.

As you know, TE 802 and TE 804 are each comprised of literacy and mathematics components. Together your grades in each component will determine your grades for TE 802 and TE 804. I will grade you on a 50-point scale for the literacy component and your math instructor will do the same for the mathematics component. We will then combine our totals and assign you a course grade based on the grading scale below.

Allocation of the 50 points for literacy assignments – fall

25 points	Draft position statement
15 points	3 in-class writings (5 points each)
10 points	Attendance, punctuality, participation

Allocation of the 50 points for literacy assignments – spring

10 points	Revised position paper
15 points	3 in-class writings (5 points each)
15 points	Integrated thematic unit
10 points	Attendance, punctuality, participation

Course Grading Scale

92 – 100	4.0
86 – 91	3.5
79 – 85	3.0
70 – 78	2.5
63 – 69	2.0
55 – 62	1.5

A reference was made to plagiarism above. This is a serious form of dishonesty. Please make certain that you are familiar with the sections of Spartan Life that deal with this issue and other issues involving the integrity of scholarship and grades. Spartan Life can be found at <http://www.ups.msu.edu/SpLife/index.htm>.

IN-CLASS WRITINGS

Three weeks each semester you will be given a writing prompt, sometimes in the form of a question and sometimes in the form of a statement, to respond to. These in-class writings are intended to help you think more deeply about the content you are reading and about your teaching experiences. Your in-class writings will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Did you respond thoroughly and thoughtfully to the writing prompt?
- Did you draw upon and show evidence from the week's reading to support your ideas?
- Did you draw upon your teaching experience, where possible, to support your ideas?
- Is your response coherent?

POSITION STATEMENT – PHILOSOPHY OF LITERACY LEARNING

I share my beliefs only as a way for you to think about your own beliefs. Each person's learning theory will be somewhat different, based on individual life experiences, observations of students, interactions with colleagues, professional reading, knowledge, and interpretations of the research and understanding of language learning. There is no one correct set of beliefs. My beliefs and attitudes continue to develop and change, to be integral to all areas of my teaching and to influence the way I approach children, the curriculum and learning.

(Reggie Routman, *Invitations: Changing as Teachers and Learners K-12*, 1994, p. 12)

For this assignment you will write a draft of a position paper on literacy learning in which you set forth beliefs and attitudes about learning to read and write. This will be a first step in defining and articulating your personal philosophy about teaching literacy and learning to become literate. You will refine this draft at the beginning of the second semester to create a document that will be the basis of part of your professional portfolio.

This assignment requires you to present a principled position on literacy education which reflects your knowledge of the work of theorists such as Piaget and Vygotsky, your foundation of knowledge about pedagogy from your undergraduate course work and your professional reading, your observations in the field, your discussions in TE courses and with colleagues, and your personal experience. You are expected to discuss your practice as you present your major understandings about the what, how and why of literacy education. These understandings underlie the choices you make as you select approaches, techniques and strategies for teaching reading and writing in your classroom. In this paper you are asked to present your beliefs and attitudes and to discuss each thoroughly – explaining, providing examples of each – in a way that makes clear how each belief or attitude would influence the way you teach reading and writing in your classroom.

Note that this assignment requires you to take a global view of literacy acquisition and instruction. You must consider these topics and issues from a K-5 (ideally a K-8) perspective. Thus, all components of the assignment (see below) should be discussed in the context of emergent, early elementary and upper elementary literacy acquisition (and ideally will address middle school as well). Note also, that some research may be required for this assignment if you find that your background knowledge is limited in one or more areas.

Your paper should be 8-10 pages in length (longer is acceptable), typed, double-spaced. It will be assessed on the following criteria:

- Did you discuss in detail your belief about the process of literacy acquisition – both reading and writing – before and during formal schooling?
- Did you discuss your position relative to the major theorists of learning (e.g., Vygotsky and Piaget) whose theories you summarized?
- Did you discuss your beliefs about the optimal environment and conditions for literacy (reading *and* writing) before and during formal schooling?
- Did you discuss how your beliefs are translated into curriculum (both reading and writing) in the inclusive context of emergent, early elementary and upper elementary instruction?
- Did you cite references (where applicable) in APA style within the paper and in your reference list at the end?
- Is your paper coherent and concise?
- Is your paper free from errors of spelling, punctuation, and grammar?

REVISED POSITION STATEMENT

Your revised position statement is due at the first class meeting of the spring semester. This assignment gives you an opportunity to reexamine your personal beliefs about literacy instruction, to continue to develop your principled position statement and to respond to the feedback you received on the draft statement paper. Criteria for evaluating this assignment are the same as those for the draft with two additional criteria: Did you respond to suggestions, questions, and comments you received on the content of your draft paper? Did you correct the errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation that were identified in your draft?

INTEGRATED LITERATURE-BASED THEMATIC UNIT

This assignment allows you to apply your understanding of literacy instruction to the development of a two-week (10 teaching days) instructional unit. The foundation of the unit is a book that is appropriate for your grade level. You will then examine your book and determine what opportunities the text (and illustrations where applicable) afford for instruction in literacy for ten days *and* for instruction in one of more of the major subject areas (mathematics, science, social studies). After identifying the appropriate standards/benchmarks for your grade level that correspond to the features and content of the book that you have selected for instruction, you will create a map that reflects the structure of the unit. You will receive details about this assignment at the first class meeting in spring semester. In addition, time will be provided in study groups to work together to help each other develop individual units.