TLL 1208/2208
Reading/Writing Methods 1: Pre-K- Grade 1
Fall 2025

Course instructor: **Michelle Sobolak, PhD**
Class: **Tuesdays & Thursdays 2:30-3:45, Posvar 5404**
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School of Education Mission/Vision Statement

We ignite learning. We strive for well-being for all. We teach. We commit to student, family, and community success. We commit to educational equity. We advocate. We work for justice. We cultivate relationships. We forge engaged partnerships. We collaborate. We learn with and from communities. We innovate and agitate. We pursue and produce knowledge. We research. We disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures. We approach learning as intertwined with health, wellness, and human development. We address how national, global, social, and technological change impacts learning. We shape practice and policy. We teach with and for dignity. We think. We dream. We lead with integrity. We are the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh.

Course Description

This course is intended for teacher candidates who are pursuing PreK-4 certification. It is the first in a two-course sequence that focuses on classroom teaching methods for literacy. It is also part of a set of courses that focuses on classroom teaching methods for literacy. It is also part of a set of courses that focus on literacy development and instruction. Other courses in the set include Reading/Writing Methods 2: Grades 2-4, Language and Literature for the Young Child, and Literacy Assessment and Instruction for Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Settings.

Teacher candidates in Reading/Writing Methods 1 will have opportunities to build their knowledge about specific aspects of literacy, including: (a) oral language development, (b) emergent literacy, (c) concepts about print, (d) comprehension, and (e) writing. In addition, candidates will learn about specific instructional approaches and resources for supporting students in developing those aspects of literacy in PreK-Grade 1.

Course Goals:

- To begin building an understanding of literacy, how diverse communities take up literacy practices, the many ways children develop as readers and writers and how to support that development along with honoring the ways that families and communities contribute to literacy development (CRSE 3.A, 6.B,8.D)
- To begin learning equitable and multi-tiered ways to assess students' understanding and use of literacy as a way to support literacy learning/teaching (CRSE 4.A)
- To begin learning about culturally relevant and sustaining instructional strategies for early literacy learning (decoding, phonics, spelling, vocabulary, comprehension of text ideas during read alouds and independent reading, and writing)

- (CRSE 4.B, 4.D)
- To study and utilize the PA Common Core standards to understand academic expectations per grade level for ALL learners and develop lessons that meet the standards while engaging all learners in authentic literacy experiences that honor and expand on their funds of knowledge (CRSE 3.A, 3C, 3.F)
- Critically evaluate literacy resources and utilize carefully curated and varied resources to teach literacy that are culturally appropriate and consider student and community backgrounds and funds of knowledge (CRSE 1.D, 2.B, 2.D, 3B, 4D)

Required Course Texts:

Beck, I. L., & Beck, M. E. (2024). Making sense of phonics: The hows and whys (3rd edition). New York: Guilford Press.

Burkins, J., & Yates, K. (2021). *Shifting the Balance: 6 ways to bring the science of reading into the balanced literacy classroom.* Portsmouth, NH: Stenhouse

Selected chapters provided on Canvas from:

Muhammad, G. (2020). *Cultivating genius: An equity framework for culturally and historically responsive literacy*. New York, NY: Scholastic

Muhammad, G. (2023). *Unearthing joy: A guide to culturally and historically responsive curriculum and instruction.* New York, NY: Scholastic

Souto-Manning M. & Martell J. (2016). *Reading writing and talk: inclusive teaching strategies for diverse learners k-2*. Teachers College Press.

Tompkins, G. E. (2020). *Literacy in the early grades: A successful start for PreK-4 readers and writers.* (5th ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson.

Articles (will be provided electronically on Canvas)

Pennsylvania Department of Education Common Ground Framework Cultural Awareness competencies: https://www.pa.gov/content/dam/copapwp-pagov/en/education/documents/educators/certification-preparation-programs/framework-guidelines-and-rubrics/common-ground-framework.pdf

Pennsylvania Department of Education Structured Literacy Competencies: https://www.stateboard.education.pa.gov/Documents/Structured%20Literacy%20Competencies%20Program%20Framework%20Guidelines.pdf

The PA Common Core Standards are available at:
http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/PA%20Core%20Standards%20ELA%20PreK-5%20March%202014.pdf

Instructor Bio
I love teaching this course. Prior to working at IUP and Pitt in teacher education, I was a teacher for 10 years. I worked as a reading specialist (K-5), Literacy Coach (K-3) and as a first-grade teacher. In my role at Pitt, I identify first as a teacher. What that means to me is that I am committed to lifelong learning about literacy teaching and how to work in culturally relevant and sustaining ways. While I instruct this course, I know that I have a lot to learn from each of you, what you bring to this course and your placement experiences. I am committed to continuously improving my teaching to ensure you are prepared as strong culturally relevant early literacy educators. This is hard work, as it was when I taught, but I am committed to supporting you as you develop into literacy educators, to learn from and with you and to always forefront the important work of teaching the whole child.

Course Requirements
This course is an opportunity for you to become part of a community of learners who are committed to learning through reading, writing, discussing, and collaborating. To be a part of that community, you are expected to attend every class meeting and participate thoughtfully in all activities. At the end of this course, I hope that we accomplish the course goals stated above, become a community of learners committed to seeing literacy as an issue of social justice and that you feel better prepared to work collectively with your students to build their literacy skills in ways that honor the assets they bring to the classroom and that invites families and communities as true partners.

University of Pittsburgh Teacher Education Attendance Policy
The teacher education faculty at the University of Pittsburgh view our courses as communities of practice. This means that we gather for collective critical inquiry and reflection that is focused on building shared knowledge over time. To be an active member of our community of practice, it is important to attend face to face courses prepared to engage with the course instructor, course colleagues, and course materials. While we believe course attendance adds value to the community of practice, we also know there may be times when students must miss class to attend to other needs. In these cases, you are afforded up to one absence per course hour. This means that if your course meets three times per week for 50 minutes each session, you are permitted three absences. **If your course meets two times per week for an hour and fifteen minutes each session, you are permitted two absences**. If your class meets once per week for two hours and thirty minutes, you are permitted one absence. Absences should be reserved for illness or unavoidable personal conflicts. Please see individual course syllabi, course instructors, and your program coordinator for additional information regarding attendance or absences that extend beyond this policy.

Final grades **will be** lowered because of absences and lack of participation and collaboration. Each absence beyond two will result in a 10-point loss to the final grade. Arriving to class late and leaving early will count as absences.

Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students. Any work that you or your team submits must be your own work. Any ideas, information, approaches, or formats that you use based on the work of others must be acknowledged by citing the appropriate sources in APA (6th ed.) style.

Course assignments are due on the date indicated. It is the expectation that all assignments will be submitted on time regardless of class attendance. Late assignments will result in a 10% loss of points for each day late (weekends included). Late assignments will not be accepted after three days past the due date and the assignment will be scored zero. However, it is still required that all assignments are completed to pass the class. This assignment policy is strict, but it is because I believe the assignments you will create put what we are learning, talking about and studying into action. The assignments are meant to be practical and applicable. If you are experiencing an extenuating circumstance, please reach out prior to the due date to discuss a possible extension. This is good practice for your professional teaching career.

Course assignments scored below 80% are eligible for revision and resubmission to earn up to an 80%.

Please be respectful of the course instructor and classmates during class by refraining from using electronic devices. Please either turn your cell phone off or to silent mode. If you need to take a call or communicate via your cell phone, please step outside of class. **Text messaging and use of social networking during class is not permitted and students not following this directive will be asked to leave class.**

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

Intellectual integrity is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. All work completed and/or submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with the University's Guidelines on Academic Integrity. You may not engage in unauthorized collaboration or make use of ChatGPT or any other generative AI applications at any time.

Disability Services

It is the intention of this course to support all learners in accessible ways. If you are experiencing or anticipate any challenges accessing course content, assignments or experiences please set up a time to meet with me outside of class. In addition, I strongly encourage each of you to carefully read and consider the University of Pittsburgh disability services statement below.

If you have a disability that requires special testing accommodations or other classroom modifications, you need to notify both the instructor and Disability Resources and Services no later than the second week of the term. You may be asked to provide documentation of your disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify Disability Resources and Services, call (412) 648-7890 (Voice or TTD) to schedule an appointment. The Disability Resources and Services office is located in 140 William Pitt Union on the Oakland campus.

Food/Housing Insecurity

Many students, both undergraduate and graduate, experience housing and/or food insecurity that can impact their academic work and general health. Please know there are resources available to you that are confidential. Of course, you are welcome to speak with me if you need support in contacting the right people/offices:

Pitt Pantry (Food Pantry available to the wider University community)
https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/search/food%20pantry
Off-Campus Housing Office: http://www.ocl.pitt.edu/

Civility Commitment
As future teachers, we will operate from a standpoint that everyone believes that all students deserve a quality education in a safe setting. The same can be said for university learning. A university classroom is, by definition, a space where free exchange of ideas must happen, but where consideration for others, their views and their life experiences is also paramount. When you are uncomfortable with an idea, it is your right to speak up about that. As we learn with and about people with very different life experiences and beliefs from our own, it is imperative that we respect these perspectives and use respectful language in discussing and challenging ideas. Carefully consider your language choices to ensure that all learners feel safe and valued. If at any time, you are uncomfortable please feel free to speak out and/or speak to me privately.

All members of this course have the right to be addressed in accordance with their personal identity. If you identify differently than what the University roster provides, let me know so that I can address you appropriately. Addressing all members appropriately is important, so please correct me if I make a mistake. If at any time, you are uncomfortable please feel free to speak out and/or speak to me privately.

In this course we will speak about dialect and language diversity. In accordance with the course expectations for respect for your students who speak languages other than or in addition to English and/or who use dialects outside of dominant American English (as we all do at times), we also will show respect for the language diversity of each other. Diverse languages and dialects are welcome in this classroom. As we communicate with one another, keep in mind that the reader/listener should work as hard as the writer/speaker in the communication process. This means that we will listen patiently, work to understand one another, seek out clarification when necessary and avoid finishing each other's sentences or correcting grammatical errors unless invited to do so.

Department of Teaching, Leading and Learning Rematriation Statement
We join one another today on the land and near the rivers originally in the care and protection of the Adena and Hopewell Nations, and the Monongahela Peoples, and shared over time by many Indigenous Nations—including the Delaware, Iroquois, and Shawnee Tribes—as a place of gathering and exchange. We join you also on the land and near the rivers cared for and cultivated as a site of Freedom, from the Underground Railroad to global uprisings for racial justice. As a process of Rematriation, we acknowledge our connection to place and honor the land as a relative.

Statement on Classroom Recording
To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

TLL Student Grievance Procedures

The rights and responsibilities of faculty and students are described in the University's Academic Integrity Guidelines at: https://www.provost.pitt.edu/academic-integrity-guidelines
The purpose of the guidelines is to ensure the rights and responsibilities of faculty and students in their relationships with each other. When a student in TLL believes that a faculty member has not met their obligations (as an instructor or in another capacity) as described in the Academic Integrity Guidelines, the student should follow this procedure:
1. The student should talk directly to the faculty member to attempt to resolve the matter.
2. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the student should talk to the relevant program coordinator.
3. If the matter remains unresolved, the student should talk to the Dr. Sheila Conway, TLL Student Liaison.
4. If needed, the student should next talk to the SOE associate dean of students (currently Dr. Andrea Zito).
5. If the matter still remains unresolved, the student should file a written statement of charges with the dean's designated Academic Integrity Administrative Officer (currently Dr. Andrea Zito).

Pennsylvania requires students to take the PECT (Pennsylvania Educator Certification Tests) to become certified. There are three modules to this test. Module 2 deals with language and literacy and social studies**. The reading faculty strongly suggest that you plan to take PECT module 2 immediately after the completion of two reading methods courses. At this time, you will have had both literacy courses and the social studies course, which are needed for module 2.**

Additional information about the PECT test can be found at: www.pa.nesinc.com/
I strongly suggest you familiarize yourself with the modules, objectives and practice test. The PECT tests are comprehensive exams that will ask that you draw upon content knowledge, pedagogy and age-appropriate teaching practices and content. Therefore, it is important to be aware of these tests early and prepare throughout your coursework.

Major Course Assignments/Assessments

Assignment/Assessment	Competencies addressed
Midterm Exam 30 points The Midterm Exam will include both open ended and multiple-choice questions that assess students' understanding of early literacy skills and development. The exam will also assess candidates' knowledge of terms and concepts related to emergent literacy, language development, phonological processing, and phonics, as well as culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogical approaches for supporting students in developing those skills.	I.B.2 a-c

Assessment Project 30 points Teacher candidates analyze a battery of early literacy assessments and prepare a report to describe the kindergarten student's strengths and weaknesses related to the structured literacy skills of: phonemic awareness, concepts of print, decoding, and spelling. Students will be asked to provide classroom instructional suggestions as well as appropriate family support suggestions that honor families as educational stakeholders.	I.B.1; III.B.; V.C.; V.S.
Phonological Awareness Lesson Plan Simulation 5pts. Teacher candidates will participate in an online simulation to support lesson plan writing. This simulation will provide candidates with support in writing as literacy lesson plan using the approved Pitt format.	I.A.1 b-e, h; I.B.1; I.B.2 a-c ; I.B.5 a-h; V.B.; V.I.; V.P.; V.T.
Phonological Awareness Lesson Plans 35 pts. Teacher candidates will develop two phonological awareness lessons to use with students in Pre-K or Kindergarten. Each lesson objective and the content will be required to reflect: the PA ELA Common Core Standards, PDE Structured Literacy Framework and also the PDE Common Ground Cultural Awareness Framework. The enacted lesson plan will include a reflection on lesson enactment, strengths, areas of improvement, and impact on learners.	I.A.1 b-e, h; I.B.1; I.B.2 a-c ; I.B.5 a-h; V.B.; V.I.; V.P.; V.T.
Phonics Lesson Plan 30 pts. Teacher candidates will develop a set of three phonics lesson plans that introduces one letter or a team of letters and the corresponding sound for students in Kindergarten and two follow-up lessons that review the letter(s) and sound. These lessons will follow the suggestions in Beck's book. Students will work in groups of 4 on this assignment. Each lesson objective and the content will be required to reflect: the PA ELA Common Core Standards, PDE Structured Literacy Framework and also the PDE Common Ground Cultural Awareness Framework	I.A.1 b-e, h; I.B.1; I.B.2 a-c; I.B.5 a-h; V.B.; V.I.; V.P.; V.T.
Word Building Lesson Plan 15 pts. Students will work in pairs/groups to videotape word building lessons taught to classmates. Groups will submit their video and decodable text with diverse characters to match the lesson. The decodable text should be from: https://justrightreader.com/pages/decodables-e-library-just-right-reader	I.A.1 b-e, h; I.B.1; I.B.2 a-c; I.B.5 a-h; V.B.; V.I.; V.P.; V.T.

Read Aloud Discussion Plan 20 pts. Teacher candidates will develop a discussion plan for a quality, robust read aloud book and select tier 2 vocabulary from the book to teach. Texts chosen should consider the identities of students in the placement site and provide a positive representation. Each lesson objective and the content will be required to reflect: the PA ELA Common Core Standards, PDE Structured Literacy Framework and also the PDE Common Ground Cultural Awareness Framework. There is an option to work with a partner on this assignment.	I.A.1 b-e, h; I.B.1; I.B.2 a-c; I.B.3 a-k; I.B.5 a-h; V.B.; V.I.; V.P.; V.T.
In-Person Simulation: Data Team Meeting 20 pts. Simulation where teacher candidate meets with another member of the data team to discuss the results of middle of year Kindergarten testing for one student. This meeting will help to decide if the student should be referred for additional tier 2 supports and/or academic evaluations.	I.A.1 b-e, h; I.B.1; I.B.2 a-c; I.B.4 a-h; I.B.5 a-h; V.B.; V.I.; V.P.; V.T.
The Right to Read: Video Viewing Guide 20 pts. Teacher candidates will watch a documentary called, "The Right to Read". After watching, we will engage in a guided discussion about the documentary. Students will also complete a reflection of the documentary outside of class that ties documentary content with course content, course readings and connections to PDE Structured Literacy and PDE Common Ground Cultural Awareness Frameworks.	I.B.1; IV.B.2
Current Events 5 pts. Teacher candidates will present a current event to the class. The event should have some relationship to education or could impact education. Be prepared to share the news article/issue with each member of the group, present the relationship to education and ask 1-2 discussion questions. Current event should be posted two days before you present. Depending on course size, students may be asked to work in pairs or small groups.	

Grading scale:

94-100% = A 90-93 = A- 87-89% = B+ 83-86%= B

80-82% = B- 74-79% = C 69-73% = D

Weekly Course Schedule

Subject to change

Class session	Activities/Topics	Assignments for the ***next*** class meeting
Aug. 26	**Getting to know you and getting to know the course** Review syllabus/assignments	• Read: Chapter 1- Unearthing the Need for Genius and Joy from Unearthing Joy: A guide to culturally and historically responsive teaching and learning. G. Muhammad (on Perusall) • Read: PDE Structured Literacy and Common Ground Cultural Awareness standards (linked above) • Come to the next class with and prepared to speak about your 3 biggest takeaways and 3 biggest wonderings about the frameworks and how they relate to the Unearthing Joy chapter.
Aug. 28	**History of Reading Instruction and literacy as a civil right**	• Read Tompkins Ch. 2- Examining Children's Literacy Development (Perusall)

	PDE ELA Common Core Standards, Structured Literacy and Culturally Relevant and Sustaining Frameworks	• Read Souto-Manning & Martell Ch. 2- Understanding the Diversity of Children's Language and Literacy Practices (Perusall) • Thompkins: Language experience approach p.356
Sept. 2	**Becoming an Effective Reading Teacher** **Children's Literacy Development:** oral language, interest in reading and writing and emergent to beginning reading and writing	• Read Souto-Manning &Martell Ch. 4- On Oral Language: Considering Meaningful Possibilities and Learning Authentically from Diverse Children in K-2 Classrooms (Perusall) **Lesson planning simulation presented**
Sept. 4	**Children's Literacy Development (continued)**	• Read Tompkins Ch. 4 (pp. 93-108) (Perusall) • Read Phillips, B., Clancy-Menchetti, J., & Lonigan, C. article: Successful phonological awareness instruction with preschool children: Lessons from the classroom (Perusall)
Sept. 9	**Phonological and Phonemic Awareness** **Lesson Planning** • Introduction of lesson planning/format	• Read Burkins & Yates Ch. 2- Recommitting to Phonemic Awareness Instruction (course text)
Sept. 11	**Phonological and Phonemic awareness** **DUE: Lesson simulation**	**Phonological awareness lesson #1 presented** • Muhammad Cultivating Genius: Intro & Chapter 1: Restoring Equity and Excellence in Today's Classroom and How 19th Century Black Literacy Societies Can Elevate Today's Literacy Learning (Perusall)
Sept. 16	**Phonemic and phonological awareness**	

	Lesson planning	
Sept. 18	**Phonemic and phonological awareness** (wrap-up) **DUE: Phonological awareness lesson #1**	• Read Tompkins Ch. 4 (remainder-Perusall) • Read Beck pp. 25-35
Sept. 23	**Cracking the Code: Phonics** • Teaching the alphabet/alphabetic principle • Letter/sound relationships	**Phonics lesson presented** • Read Beck pp. 50-62 • Tompkins Ch. 5 (Perusall)
Sept. 25	**Cracking the Code: Phonics (cont.)** **Learning to spell**	• Read Burkins & Yates Ch. 3- Reimagining the Way We Teach Phonics (course text)
Sept. 30	**Word Building**	**Introduce word building lesson**
Oct. 2	**Word Building** **DUE: Phonics lesson**	**Prepare for mid-term** **Phonological awareness lesson # 2 presented**
Oct. 7	**Midterm** **No current event**	• Tompkins: Word sorts p. 375 • Read Vines, N., Jordan, J., & Broemmel, A. article: Reinvisioning Spelling Instruction (Perusall)
Oct. 9	**Spelling and word sorting**	• Burkins &Yates Ch. 4- Revisiting High Frequency Word Instruction (course text) • Tompkins Ch. 3 (pp. 64-84) (Perusall) • Tompkins: running records p. 367
Oct. 14	**Spelling and word sorting** (wrap-up) **Assessment of early learners** (intro.)	**Assessment project presented** • Explore Reading Rockets website- early reading assessment to guide instruction: https://www.readingrockets.org/article/early-reading-assessment-guiding-tool-instruction

	DUE: Word Building lesson plan and video	
Oct. 16	**Assessment of early learners' students** (wrap-up) **Assessment Practice**	
Oct. 21	**Assessment practice** (cont.) **DUE: Phonological awareness lesson #2 and implementation reflection**	**Review assessment project** • Read Burkins and Yates Ch. 1- Rethinking How Reding Comprehension Begins (course text)
Oct. 23	**Comprehension:** The ultimate goal	• Read Burkins and Yates Ch. 6- Reconsidering Texts for Beginning Readers
Oct. 28	**Comprehension:** The ultimate goal	• Read: Duke, N.K., Ward, A.E., & Pearson, P.D. (2021). The Science of Reading Comprehension Instruction. *Reading Teacher*, 74(6), 663– 672. (Perusall)
Oct. 30	**Comprehension:** The ultimate goal	• Read Tompkins Ch. 7- Building Students Vocabulary (Perusall) • Read Beck, & McKeown, M. G. (2001). Text Talk: Capturing the Benefits of Read-Aloud Experiences for Young Children. *The Reading Teacher*, *55*(1), 10–20. (Perusall)
Nov. 4	**Text Talk:** Read aloud as context for comprehension and vocabulary instruction **DUE: Assessment project**	**Text talk/discussion plan presented** • Read Souto-Manning & Martell Ch 5- On Reading Words and Worlds pp. 93- 97 (Perusall)
Nov. 6	**Text talk (wrap up)**	• Read Differentiating Instruction Chs. 1-2 (Perusall)
Nov. 11	**Differentiating literacy instruction:** in action ** have your phonological awareness lesson #2 for class** **DUE: Discussion plan**	• Read Souto-Manning & Martell Ch 6- On Writing Words and Worlds pp. 111-121 (Perusall) • Read Hall, A. H. article: Sustaining Preschoolers' Engagement During Interactive Writing Lessons (Perusall)

Nov. 13	**Interactive writing** • How does early writing relate to emergent reading? • How does differentiation take place?	• Read Muhammad Cultivating Genius: Ch. 4- Toward the Pursuit of Skills (Perusall)
Nov. 18	**Writing Continued**	• Prepare for In Person Simulation Meeting
Nov 20	**In Person Simulation (more details coming)**	
Nov 25 & 27	**NO CLASS: Thanksgiving Break**	
Dec. 2	**The Right to Read:** documentary	• Complete *The Right to Read* video viewing guide and reflection
Dec. 4	**The Right to Read & Course Wrap-up** **DUE: The Right to Read viewing guide and reflection**	