



Professional Development Institute

Flex Course Syllabus

Mastering the Text Complexity Challenge in Grades 4-8

PDI Course Number: 46T02

ACE Course Number: LE5783

UCSD Course Number: EDUC41603

If you would like information about receiving credit for completing this course, [please click here](#).

Course Timeline

Participants have one year to complete the course. Participants must spend a minimum of three weeks in this course.

Course Description

Are you struggling to help your students master text complexity for your grade level? This online course is designed for teachers of grades four through eight who are interested in learning the best practices for helping their students master text complexity. This course begins with an overview of standards for ELA, literature, and informational texts. Teachers will learn strategies for assessing text complexity, asking and answering text-dependent questions, using textual evidence, teaching important standards-related and vocabulary building strategies. An emphasis is placed upon strategies and techniques for helping students learn how to read both narrative and information texts closely. Text exemplars are shared along with specific tools for analyzing texts. Teachers will also learn questioning techniques specific for students who struggle. Teachers will learn the importance of building vocabulary, as well as the vocabulary self-correction strategy to assist students in comprehending complex text. Finally, teachers will learn strategies for helping students explore theme and author's message in a variety of genres. By the end of this course, teachers will be better prepared to help their students understand and master text complexity.

Educational Objectives

1. Teachers will have a better understanding of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts.
2. Teachers will learn how to help students with the transition to the rigorous requirements of the Common Core State Standards.
3. Teachers will learn how to manage their curriculum such that reading can be integrated into all content areas.
4. Teachers will learn about text complexity and how to analyze texts for levels of complexity.
5. Teachers will become familiar with text exemplars
6. Teachers will learn the concept of close reading and its benefits.
7. Teachers will learn strategies for incorporating close reading practices into the classroom.
8. Teachers will learn how to level texts and appropriately assign texts based on reading ability.
9. Teachers will learn how to help students build important vocabulary skills.
10. Teachers will understand the role writing has in improving reading skills and how to use writing to develop students' reading.
11. Teachers will learn how to teach students to ask and answer questions with evidence.
12. Teachers will learn important strategies for teaching questioning techniques to struggling readers.
13. Teachers will learn critical strategies for differentiating instruction through leveling texts.
14. Teachers will gain a detailed understanding of disciplinary literacy and content integration.
15. Teachers will learn techniques for teaching theme and author's message.
16. Teachers will learn strategies for teaching genre, and gain valuable activities to use with students.

Instructional Media

- Online Discussions
- Online Engagement
- Online Collaboration
- Instructor Feedback
- Instructor Interaction
- Online Resources and Websites
- Supplemental Instructional Materials
- Printable Classroom Resources

Evaluation

- Quiz #1 (5% of final grade)
- Quiz #2 (5% of final grade)
- Quiz #3 (5% of final grade)
- Quiz #4 (5% of final grade)
- Quiz #5 (5% of final grade)
- Autobiography and Goals for the Course (10% of final grade)
- Article Reflection (15% of final grade)
- Course Collaboration/Share Ideas with the Class (10% of final grade)
- Develop Text-Dependent Questions, Vocabulary Lists, and Close Strategy for Two Texts or Chapters (20% of final grade)
- Culminating Practicum (20% of final grade)

Topical Outline

Unit One

- Overview of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts
- Standards for Literature
- Standards for Informational Text
- Balancing Types of Texts
- **Assignment #1**
Write an autobiography including information about yourself, your grade level and what you specifically hope to learn in this course. Your autobiography should be a minimum of three paragraphs.
- **Quiz #1**

Unit Two

- Overview of Text Complexity
- Text Exemplars and Other Tools for Analyzing Texts
- Leveled Texts
- **Assignment #2**
As an educator, it is important to be aware of the research, studies, and professional work done in the field. In the course, you will find an article that is relevant to the specific course content. Read the article and then write an essay with your thoughts.
- **Quiz #2**

Unit Three

- Asking and Answering Questions with Evidence
- Questioning Techniques to Help Readers Who Struggle
- Overview of Disciplinary Literacy and Content Integration

- **Assignment # 3**
Please post a tip, strategy, or idea that specifically relates to the content of this course and will make a difference to other teachers in their own classrooms. Your assignment should be a minimum of three paragraphs.
- **Quiz #3**

Unit Four

- Overview of Close Reading
- Close Reading with Literature
- Close Reading with Informational Texts
- **Quiz #4**

Unit Five

- Building Vocabulary
- Vocabulary Self-Collection
- Writing with Reading in Mind
- **Quiz #5**

Unit Six

- Understanding and Working with Theme and Author's Message
- Exploring Genre
- Resources for Reading in Grades 4-8
- **Assignment #4**
*Choose two books or two chapters that you will soon be introducing to your class. For **each** of the two books, complete the following.*
 - *Name and author of the book or titles of the textbook chapters.*
 - *Locate a minimum of ten tier II vocabulary words. Note the page numbers you found these words on.*
 - *Choose one concept for students to focus on as part of a close reading of the text and explain the reasoning for your choice in a minimum of five sentences.*
 - *Write a minimum of two questions for each of the six types of text-dependent questions as identified by Douglas Fisher. They are provided below for your convenience.*
- **Assignment #5**
The culminating practicum is a three-step process. (1) In the first assignment, you were asked what goals you had and what you hoped to learn from the course. Think back to your original goals for this course. Write a minimum two-paragraph reflection specifically describing how what you learned can be used to help you reach those goal(s). (2) Next, write a minimum three-paragraph plan that specifically describes the ways in which you intend to implement a particular strategy you learned in this course into your own teaching situation. (3) Last, write a minimum two-paragraph reflection describing a student you have or have

had in the past. Then, discuss how the strategies you learned in this course will specifically benefit that student as you put your plan into action.

Bibliography

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