UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT NEAG SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

EDCI 4130: TEACHING LANGUAGE ARTS IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SPRING 2011

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Course Description
Students in EDCI 4130 study current theories and practices of effective language arts instruction by connecting speaking, listening, reading, and writing and by integrating children’s literature and content learning.

Course Objectives
This course is aligned with the University of Connecticut Educator Preparation Program’s Conceptual Framework. Specifically, content and objectives address Learning by developing the professional knowledge base and understandings of evidence-based professional practice and theory; Leading by developing intellectual habits of inquiry and a commitment to transformative and moral leadership; and Lighting the Way by embracing diversity and inspiring educators to promote equity and human rights. As a result of this course, you will be able to:

1. Evolve a personal philosophy of language arts learning and instruction.
2. Understand, develop, and practice effective, integrated methods of language arts learning and instruction.
4. Understand theories of learner-centered classrooms.
5. Understand and practice effective evaluation of literacy growth, which include both student and teacher reflection.
6. Be able to create classroom conditions for effective language arts learning.
7. Understand language conventions and mechanics in order to teach them within the context of real reading and writing.
9. Explore issues of teaching students with diverse backgrounds and needs.
10. Understand and use principles of effective listening and response, group discussion, and group dynamics.
11. Develop personal reading, writing, conversation, and listening skills through workshop practice.
12. Continue to develop the concept of teachers as learners and students as teachers.

Required Readings
4. Various articles and chapters handed out by us.
5. A young adult novel that you choose from a selection.
Coursework

1) **Class Participation.** You must attend all classes during the nine days on campus in order to earn the three credits for EDCI 4130. Be prepared to participate actively through discussion and response. If you feel uncomfortable speaking in front of groups, please see us so that we can help you to participate.

2) **Course Assignments.** Complete all readings and assignments thoughtfully, thoroughly, and on time.

3) **A Writer's Notebook.** We will keep notebooks that record our experiences “reading the world.” They will document our thoughts, observations, speculations, epiphanies, confusions, agreements, and disagreements, and words we find extraordinary. Your notebook will accompany you into student teaching as a valuable tool for reflection. (You can also conceive of this as a teacher's notebook and a reader's notebook.)

4) **Responses to In the Company of Children.** On a nightly basis, you will respond to your reading, discussing some aspect of the text that intrigued you, enlightened you, worried you, confused you, gave you new ideas for teaching, etc. You will post your responses on the Ning. Responses will be personal and informal, and they should take no more than five to ten minutes to complete.

5) **A Literacy Poster.** Using posterboard (or in some other medium of your choice), you will create a representation of yourself as a reader, writer, learner, and teacher. You will be able to share this representation with your classmates and students so that they get to learn about who you are as a literate person. (We will offer ideas and guidelines during the first week of class.) Literacy posters are due on **Monday, January 24th,** when we will put them up in class.

6) **A Piece of Original Writing.** You will write, illustrate, and publish a piece for which you will choose topic, style, and genre. You have to write on a topic that matters to you. Your only limitation is that you must also be able to share your piece—and its process of creation—with your own students. We will spend daily workshop time drafting, conferring, and revising this writing. (Your writer's notebook will help you to accumulate potential writing.) In doing so you will learn some of the challenges and opportunities that children encounter when writing in the classroom. Once you complete your piece, you will evaluate both your process of creation and your final product. On **Friday, January 28th** you will share your piece with our class during an exhibit/celebration. You will then take it so that you can share it with your students and return it by **Monday, February 14th** so that we can read and respond to it.

7) **Two Book Reviews.** You will choose two children's books that you think are exceptional—one that is a favorite from your childhood and one that has been written recently—and write short book reviews for each of them. The reviews should help other teachers decide which books to acquire for their own classroom libraries. They are due on **Friday, February 4th,** via the Ning. We will supply you with a format for organizing them and submitting them. You can then access everyone's reviews from the Ning.

8) **A Student Teaching Project.** As part of your student teaching, you will engage in teacher research—observing, collecting information about, and reflecting on some aspect of your literacy instruction and learning. You will write a three- to five-page paper (plus any necessary appendices) documenting your findings. Appendices can document your data collection processes and provide examples of student work.

   Discuss this project with your cooperating teacher immediately, in order to work out logistics.

   In order to protect the privacy of students, teachers, and the school, you will assign pseudonyms to all.

   Be sure to remove students' names from any collected work.

   During class, we will offer you written guidelines for collecting and reporting information. These projects will be due in **April,** on a date to be determined during this class.

Class-Time Activity

The class is set up as a workshop. You will influence nature of each class by your questions, interests, and needs, but certain elements will usually be present. They include: 1) mini-lessons on aspects of the teaching and learning of language arts, 2) small group discussions and literacy discussions devoted to readings and other things, 3) whole class discussions, 4) workshop time to read, write, and work on projects, 5) time to share our work with others and receive response, 6) time to share and respond to children's literature, 7) silent reading time, and 8) time to speak with leaders in the field of literacy and language arts instruction.
Evaluation and Grading

Evaluation is the center of learning. We document and reflect on our own progress through our writing and our discussions. We respond to one another as thoughtful colleagues—as interested listeners who want to learn from you. We intend to encourage you, challenge you, and stretch your thinking.

You and we will also evaluate your piece of original writing and your students teaching project. You will fill out “Writing Reflections” in which you evaluate your process of creation, what you learned, and what your work might teach the reader. We will not assign grades to writers’ notebooks because this is where we explore and take risks; grading them defeats their purpose. However, we will grade you on the completion, on the due dates, of all required assignments. You must write a lot (and therefore think a lot) to make important discoveries.

The other factors that influence your grade are your attendance and participation in class. You will share the responsibility with us for determining your grade at the end of the semester, after we have suggested a variety of specific areas to evaluate in your process, product, and performance. If our perceptions of your grade differ by more than a full letter, we will discuss your grade together in a conference. We will contact you if we feel at any time that your work is below what we would consider a B+. Please consult with us any time you have questions.

Our thought is to grade according to your work in the following areas (though we can also discuss other criteria that you think are important):

1) Attendance and in-class participation
2) Completion of all readings and class work
3) Completion of one-pager response to the book Conferences & Conversations
4) Completion of Ning responses to In the Company of Children.
5) Completion of Literacy Poster
6) Two book reviews on Ning (and books brought in for last-day exhibition)
7) Original writing piece and its successful exhibition (evaluated by both you and us).
8) Student teaching project (evaluated by both you and us)
Schedule

Tuesday, January 18th:
Due:
- *Conferences & Conversations* 175 pages
- One-pager response to *Conferences & Conversations*

Wednesday, January 19th:
Due:
- Read *In the Company of Children*, Introduction and Chapters 1-3 33 pages
- Read assigned pages from your literature discussion books _pages
- Write one question or comment on our Ning about the reading
- Write questions to ask Linda Rief and her students about their literacy classroom
- Write one question to ask Jen Tyler about how to build your classroom at the beginning of the year
- Write 10 minutes in writer’s notebook (Bring in writer’s notebooks)
- Work on Literacy posters
- Work on writing projects
- Bring in Post-It Notes
- Think about favorite poem or short script to bring on Monday

Thursday, January 20th:
Due:
- Read *In the Company of Children*, Chapters 4-5 27 pages
- Read assigned pages from your literature discussion books _pages
- Write one question or comment about the reading on our Ning
- Be prepared to talk about elements of the test that surprised you, concerned you, pleased you, disturbed you, or made you want to know more.
- Write 10 minutes in writer’s notebook (Bring in writer’s notebooks).
- Work on literacy poster
- Work on writing projects

Friday, January 21st:
Due:
- Read *In the Company of Children*, Chapters 6-7 23 pages
- Read assigned pages from your literature discussion books _pages
- Write one question or comment about the reading on our Ning
- Write 10 minutes in your writer’s notebook
- Work on literacy posters
- Work on writing projects
- Bring in a list of questions and concerns you have about student teaching

Monday, January 24th:
Due:
- Read *In the Company of Children*, Chapters 8-10 37 pages
- Read assigned pages from your literature discussion books—finish the book!
- Write one question or comment about the reading in our Ning
- Write 10 minutes in writer’s notebook
- Bring in literacy posters
- Bring in two copies of a favorite poem or short script for reader’s theater
- Work on your writing projects
Tuesday, January 25th
Due:
- **Read** *In the Company of Children*, Chapters 11-12 and Epilogue 36 pages
- Write one question or comment about reading on our Ning
- Write 10 minutes in writer’s notebook
- Write a question to ask a town children’s librarian about how to use libraries to your advantage
- Work on your writing projects
- **Bring in** Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices

Wednesday, January 26th
Due:
- Read “The Lessons that Children Teach Us: Integrating Children’s Literature and the New Literacies of the Internet” or “HOT Blogging: A Framework for Blogging to Promote Higher Order Thinking”
- Write one question or comment about reading on our Ning
- Write 10 minutes in your writer’s notebook.
- Practice Readers’ Theater presentation.
- Work on your writing projects.

Thursday, January 27th
Due:
- Read “Poor Teaching for Poor Kids,” by Alfie Kohn (*Language Arts*)
- Read “One Reading Specialist’s Response to High-Stakes Testing Pressures,” by Lori Assaf (*Reading Teacher*)
- Read *Hartford Courant* article about Matthew Dicks
- Write one question or comment about the readings on our Ning
- Practice Readers’ Theater presentation
- Work on your writing projects

Friday, January 28th
Due:
- **Bring in** finished writing project (with rough draft work)
- **Bring in** two favorite children’s books, one from your childhood and one current
- **Bring in** potential topics for final project (Refer to Conferences & Conversations, pp. 195-207)
- **Bring in** any unreturned literature discussion books
- Practice Readers’ Theater presentation

Friday, February 4th:
Due:
- Book reviews of your two children’s books, on our Ning

Monday, February 14th
Return:
- Your pieces of original writing for our review, along with all drafts and “Writing Reflection”

TBA: April
Due:
- Your student teaching project (**We will determine the April due date of your student teaching project during class**)