

Framingham State College
Professional Development
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Course: *Balanced Literacy (four Sessions)*
Target Students: Grade 4 – 8 Language Arts and Content Area Teachers
Required text: None. Articles and websites available online
Assignments: Weekly written responses to focus area readings and writing prompts will be required, and a final sharing presentation of sample lesson framework consisting of one of the strategies from each module applied to a sample text selection.

This course will provide an overview of the four key areas for a Balanced Literacy Program for students in Grades 4 – 8. It is designed for both self-contained elementary classrooms and middle school Language Arts and content area classes. The goal is to share best practices in literacy instruction appropriate to the developmental needs and curriculum standards for those grade levels, leading to increased active, independent learning and improved student achievement.

Module I **Reading Comprehension**

This module will focus on those researched-based instructional strategies designed to foster student engagement with text and lead to increased understanding, retention and test-taking abilities. Strategies such as QAR, Re Quest, Think-Alouds, KWL, Reciprocal Teaching, DR-TA and others will be covered and applied in various subjects.

Module II **Writing**

This module will cover those skills and strategies which are part of “Writing to Learn” techniques, also designed to increase comprehension of non-fictional material. Such strategies include graphic organizers, summarizing, note-taking, journals and learning logs, and others which bridge the reading-writing connection.

Module III **Study Skills: Before, During and After Reading Strategies**

This module will introduce those strategies which are applied, before, during and after the reading process to strengthen the student’s study habits and test-taking skills. Examples are advanced organizers, previewing and predicting, anticipation guides, I charts, text patterns, reading guides, and scaffolding vocabulary.

Module IV **Literature**

No literacy program is complete without a sound, comprehensive literature component. We learn to read with our heads, but we learn to *love to read* with our hearts. This module will focus on strategies which lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of fiction, both as a separate unit or integrated with other content area themes or lessons. Literature Circles, Focus Units, and other responses to literature will be covered.

Objectives

Students don't learn what the teacher does; they learn what they do.

1. To understand the importance of designing an effective, balanced literacy instructional program for Grades 4 – 8.
2. To learn those key active learning strategies associated with the four main literacy focus areas: reading comprehension; writing to learn, study skills; and literature.
3. To know how to implement those strategies in Language Arts classes and content area subjects.
4. To create independent, active student learners who can monitor, assess and appropriately apply learning strategies supported by initial teacher modeling and ongoing coaching.
5. To appreciate how the literacy focus areas can be combined and integrated into an instructional planning framework, based on the identified needs of your students, for a specific text unit or topic.

Assignments*

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|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I. Journal Entries | personal reflections and prompts for each module |
| II. Reading Responses | reactions, comments on web-based articles and research |
| III. Writing Assignments | questions to assess your understanding, analysis and use of the strategies and document materials |

*There are one or two reading and writing assignments, plus the journal entry for each module. Plan on two hours per module for the assigned readings and the writing assignments.

Final Project: Sharing Session – Instructional Framework

Each student will create a sample lesson instructional framework based on a specific grade level/subject area/class profile and a corresponding text or topic. This framework will consist of a selected, appropriate strategy representing each module, i.e. reading comprehension, writing, study skills, and a linked literature response activity. The framework will also include the rationale for your choices, steps to be taken in the instructional process, materials, and all class or group activities. (What will you do, and what will the students do?)

Example:

Grade 6

Social Studies – “Civil War”

Comprehension strategy – Reciprocal Teaching

Writing – Cause and Effect Graphic Organizer

Study Skill – “HEART” System

Literature Link – Across Five Aprils + Response Journal