

Balanced Literacy 4: Building a Community of Writers
EDUO 9201

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Note: This is a Public syllabus of the course. For a full detailed syllabus please email the instructor.

Course Overview

Participants will learn how to create a classroom environment that is conducive to writing and supports effective writing instruction for all learners, including struggling writers and English Language Learners. The continuum of skills that good writers possess will be reviewed. As they experience the writing process, participants will create a piece of their own writing.

This self-guided course is designed for you, as a writer, to have fun and learn to focus on the skills that you will transfer to your students.

Course Objectives

By the end of Session 1, participants will be able to:

- Build a community of writers.
 - A. Create a classroom community that supports writing that is developmentally appropriate and culturally diverse.
 - B. Construct a plan using information gained from readings to create a classroom environment that promotes good writing.

By the end of Session 2, participants will be able to:

- Explore the stages of writing development.
 - A. Understand the developmental stages of writing.
 - B. Examine the connection between developmental stages of writing and grade level expectations and core learning standards.
 - C. Focus on various strategies for developing writing abilities of all learners, including ELL students and struggling writers.

By the end of Session 3, participants will be able to:

- Review the writing process.
 - A. Understand the varying stages in the writing process.
 - B. Plan instruction aimed at meeting these stages.
 - C. Complete the writing process and develop a published piece to use as a model for students.

Course Materials – All Course Materials and Resources will be provided in the Full Syllabus

1. CD-ROM

- Videos:
 - [*A Morning in a Kindergarten Classroom*](#)

2. Professional Development Materials

- Annotated Content and Essential Questions
- Menu of Key Concepts and Related Resources

Session 1: Building a Community of Writers

Overview

Good writers are good readers. Writing gives voice to our inner thoughts and allows us to share them. As a form of communication, writing can transcend time and is a way to pass stories from generation to generation.

It has been said that the best way to improve anyone's reading is to have them write. Writing focuses students on phonics, comprehension, mechanics, developing their voice or perspective, and communicating this perspective to others. Gone are the days of diagramming sentences. Balanced Literacy focuses on both the reader's and the writer's workshops, developing the many skills that good readers and writers possess, in an authentic method of communication.

Teachers need to create an environment that is safe, encourages risk, and provides the support for learning the skills essential to the craft of writing. Balanced Literacy provides the teacher with many opportunities to model writing for their students, thereby infusing the skills necessary for their students to develop. The first step is always to observe the writer and his or her writing. From there, teachers can comment on success, note a teaching point, guide content, and-for more advanced writers-offer examples of good writing so that the student can apply what is appropriate.

Assignments:

1. List what you feel are the elements necessary to create a classroom writing community. Cite articles in session one as your sources.
2. Consider your classroom and your list in #1 What do you already have in place?
3. What do you need to work on to foster a classroom writing community?

Session 2: Stages of Writing Development

Overview

People experience predictable stages of development while gaining skills. Before you learned to drive, you had to learn about the parts of the car, what the gas and brake pedals were for, and how to start the engine. It took

much practice-first on empty streets or parking lots, then on quiet roads-before you were ready to drive in traffic.

Language development also occurs in predictable stages. Babies coo, mimic sounds, learn one-word identifiers for what they want, and eventually put it all together to form coherent words and sentences. Similarly, writers begin with scribbles, evolve to picture, and eventually begin to use letters to represent sounds. From these basic skills, they can later create words, sentences, stories -there is no limit.

It is vital for teachers to understand the stages of writing so they can help their students advance to higher levels. It is a rare class that contains students who are all on the same functional level. Balanced literacy allows teachers to bring students to a higher level, no matter where on the continuum they are.

English Language Learners and struggling readers and writers present unique challenges. Success for students for whom English is another language depends greatly on how well they learned their first language. If they went through the appropriate developmental stages in their first language, most can adapt to English by transferring the skills they have already learned. But for those who did not acquire language through appropriate stages, as well as those who are struggling readers, the teacher must be aware of where their students' deficiencies fit on the continuum in order to help them improve. The goals are the same. The instruction must be paced more slowly and with more explicit direction.

Assignments

Developmental Stages of Writing

1. Identify the developmental stages of writing. Cite Session Two readings as your sources.
2. Collect and examine student narrative writing samples in your classroom. Scan one writing sample onto your computer. Discuss the current stage of the student and what you notice about the writing in relation to the developmental stages.

Stages of Writing Development Continuum

8. In what ways can you use Stages of Writing Development Continuum information with the parents of your students?

Struggling Writer

10. Reflect on a struggling writer in your class. Where does this student fit on the continuum of writing skills development?

"Your Life in Seven Stories"

14. Revisit your list of seven stories. Which one of the seven stories will you choose to take through the writing process?

Session 3: The Writing Process

Overview

The writing process is a cycle repeated many times. **Pre-writing** is the first stage, and this happens consciously or unconsciously. Knowing that you have to compose a document, you will probably mull ideas in your head before you ever set pen to paper. Students may need guidance in formulating ideas, and this stage of the process is designed to stimulate thoughts. This can be an extensive process, sometimes taking more time than the writing.

The **first draft** gets your ideas on paper without much concern for the mechanics. It is the starting point from which all future versions will flow. After looking over your draft or sharing it with another reader, you will begin to **revise** by checking for content, organization, and clarity. The next phase is **editing**, where the mechanics of writing are reviewed. Sentence structure, spelling, punctuation, and grammar are considered.

The final phase-**publishing**-prepares the written work to be shared with others. Published authors claim to have created countless drafts, and some feel they never have finished.

Assignments

You as a writer. "Your Life in Seven Stories"

1. Think about the story you selected to write about. Get a "snapshot" in your mind, or look at an actual photograph from that time. Zoom in on one moment of this story. Look at it with a narrow focus, like looking through a lens of a camera. Write this portion of your story.

Classroom Application

Explore the information presented on the various websites.

2. List the stages of a writing workshop.

8. Pick one of the stages and share at least three ways you develop a writer in that stage. For example, if you choose pre-writing, list three strategies you teach students in the pre-writing stage.

Assessment

- Submit the final draft of the story you chose from "Your Life in Seven Stories" list.

Supplementary Materials are included in the Full Syllabus

- You are allowed 9 months to complete the course. Course questions? Contact your instructor by email.
- For questions involving your registration or to change your address please contact us at support@dominicanCAonline.com or call (800) 626-5080.
- For Dominican Self-Guided course information go to <http://dominicancaonline.com/Dominican-CA-Online-FAQ>

Course Assessment Rubric

EXCELLENT Meets or Exceeds Course Objectives: A to A-	ACCEPTABLE Majority of Work Meets Course Objectives; B+ to B-	NOT ACCEPTABLE Needs Considerable Improvement: Resubmit Work Suggested: C or below
All work is very well organized.	Most work is generally well organized.	Work shows little or no organization.
Answers are well thought out and demonstrates reflection on the material.	Answers are complete and demonstrate some reflection on the material.	Answers are brief and do not demonstrate any reflection on the material.
Assignment use specific examples or references from multiple sources.	Assignment use specific examples or references from just a few sources.	Assignment do not use specific examples or references from the readings.
All assignment are completed using complete sentences.	The majority of the assignments are completed using complete sentences.	Assignments are not completed in complete sentences.
Work is free of spelling and/or grammatical errors.	Work has few spelling and/or grammatical errors.	Work has numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors.

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