



## **Whispering to Readers: Independent Reading Plans for the K-12 Classroom**

**EDUO 9222**

**1, 2 or 3 credits/units, 15, 30 or 45 hours**

**Instructor - Kathy Murphy**

[kmurphy@dominicancaonline.com](mailto:kmurphy@dominicancaonline.com)

### **Course Description**

“Donalyn Miller is a dedicated teacher who says she has yet to meet a child she could not turn into a reader.” Using the authentic and practical advice in her books, teachers of all grade levels will be inspired to turn their classrooms into learning environments that treasure and promote independent reading, and their students into lifelong lovers of books. As it did for Ms. Miller’s students, this focus on reading freedom will significantly improve the literacy skills and standardized test scores for students everywhere.

This course is designed with the flexibility for teachers to select one (15hrs.), two (30 hrs.), or three (45hrs.) graduate credits (units), as well as the freedom to choose from a menu of assignments the work that will be most beneficial for their specific needs and interests.

Teachers will have the opportunity to reflect on their own reading lives as well as develop student interest inventories and evaluations, explore ideas for readers’ notebooks, conference notes, book reviews and response letters. Even if you are required to follow a district or school mandated program, this course will provide you with ideas to “steal moments for independent reading” in school every day. Most importantly, this course validates the time teachers need to read and evaluate all types of books for children and young adults so they can insightfully develop and enhance their classroom libraries.

### **Requirements**

- 1 credit – 5 hours reading and annotating book
- 6 hours required activities #1,2,3,4
- 5 hours **Complete 3 your choice Assignments** or
- #9 Reading classroom books (**log 5 hours**)
- Total Hours: 15**

2 credits - 5 hours reading and annotating book  
5 hours required activities #1,2,3,4  
10 hours: **Complete 6 your choice Assignments, and**  
#9 Reading classroom library books (log 10 hours)  
**Total Hours: 30**

3 credits - 5 hours reading and annotating book  
5 hours required activities #1, 2, 3, 4  
15 hours Complete **ALL Your Choice Assignments and**  
#9 Reading classroom library books (log 20 hours)  
**Total Hours: 45**

\*\* If you have already thoroughly read the required book before embarking on this course, use the five hours allotted for reading the text to read Ms Miller's new book, ***Reading in the Wild: The Book Whisperer's Key*** by Donalyn Miller, Susan Kelley, Jossey-Bass, 2013 or spend the time familiarizing yourself with additional classroom library books.

**Required Text** *The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child* - Donalyn Miller, Jossey-Bass, 2009 **Supplemental Text** *Reading in the Wild: The Book Whisperer's Key* by Donalyn Miller, Susan Kelley, Jossey-Bass, 2013

## Course Objectives

- **To deepen understanding of the importance of free choice, independent reading and its important contributions to student achievement.**
- **To reflect and write about your own reading life, and how your experiences influenced your life and your interactions with your students as readers.**
- **To reflect and write about best ideas for motivating students to love reading, as well as finding time every day for independent reading in school.**
- **To provide ideas from classroom experiences on how to organize, manage, and sustain an independent reading program. Ideas include scheduling time, readers' notebooks, conference notes, book reviews, student inventories and evaluations.**
- **To provide time to locate and read short stories and picture books to be used as mentor texts to teach literary elements and/or reading skills.**
- **To provide time to locate and read literature of all types for classroom libraries from K-12.**
- **To create posts for teachers to share mentor texts, book reviews and best practices for promoting independent reading.**

## Grading Rubric

Exemplary: A+ to A-	Acceptable: B+ to B-	Unacceptable:
Reflective, thoughtful ideas relevant to the assignment are clearly stated	Presents some relevant ideas and connections to the assignment	Ideas are not clear or relevant
Very well organized	Generally well organized	Shows little or no organization
Responses relate numerous facts and specific details of the program materials	Some facts and specific details of the program materials are included	Few or no facts or specific details of the program materials are included
Free of spelling and/or grammatical errors	Writing contains a few spelling and/or grammatical errors	Numerous spelling and/or grammatical errors make the writing difficult to read

### Required Assignments for one, two or three unit options

1. Finding Your Inner Reader. Please introduce yourself briefly. Where are you teaching and what grade levels are your students? Complete your own personal self-reflection about your reading life, using the questions on page 111. **(paper, 2 page minimum)**
2. After reading Donalyn Miller's explanation of her 40 book requirement in Chapter 4, determine the number of books per year that would be appropriate for your students. Similar to the chart on page 78, create a list for your book requirements. Identify each genre, the number of books to be read for each genre, and briefly explain your reasons for each of these choices. **(paper, Reading Requirements by Genre)**
3. Stealing Reading Moments. *"Even if you must follow a district or school mandated program that includes scripted drill activities and a lockstep curriculum, you can make time for independent reading."* Reflect on the ideas presented in Chapter 3 for finding time for independent reading in school. Think about your schedule and the demands of your instructional programs. Knowing that time spent on free voluntary reading is the most effective literacy activity to improve student achievement, explain how you plan to schedule at least 20-30 minutes per day for independent reading. **(paper, 1 page minimum)**
4. *"Engagement is the most important condition for learning and must exist in a successful classroom."* After reading this book, and from your own experiences, what are your best ideas for motivating students to love reading? What practices have you found successful and would recommend to other teachers? **(paper, 2 pg. minimum, post to discussion board)**

### **Your Choice Assignments**

1. Develop a Reading Interest Inventory for your students. Use the Interest-A-Lyzer presented on page 202 as a guide. **(Copy of your Inventory)**
2. Keeping a Reader's Notebook. At the end of chapter 4, Donalyn describes in detail each section of the reading notebook she uses for herself and her students. Please describe in similar detail the reader's notebook you use, or plan to use, with your students. What will the students' notebook look like? What will your reader's notebook look like? **(2 page paper, describe student and teacher notebooks. Provide examples if possible.)**
3. Based upon ideas from the book, describe your system for scheduling and keeping conference notes with students about their reading. Please attach any forms you developed to use with students. **(paper and conference related documents)**
4. In Chapter 4, Donalyn explains that she requires her students to submit one response letter each week. She provides an example of a student letter (101) and her letter of response (102).  
Your expectations for your students' responses will depend on their age and grade level. Explain how you plan to have your students respond and how often? Will you create a template with guidelines for their responses? How do you plan to respond to them? Please attach any documents you develop to guide students in this process. **(paper describing guidelines for students. Provide examples of student responses.)**
5. After reading Donalyn Miller's views about reading logs, explain your position on this topic. Please describe your experiences, positive and/or negative, with reading logs for yourself or your students. What recommendations would you make to improve this practice? **(paper, 1 page minimum)**
6. Develop an End of the Year Reading Evaluation that is appropriate for the age and grade level of your students. Use the example on pages 154-155 as a guide. **(evaluation form for students)**
7. Creating a Classroom Library
  - A. After reading Appendix A, what ideas might you try when organizing and managing your classroom library? **(1 page paper and photos of classroom library)**
  - B. The author mentions that she has acquired all the books in her classroom library with her own money. Using the internet and/or resources in your community and state, find at least two possible sources (i.e. donorschoose.org) that would donate books or money to fund your classroom library. Submit your application or letter of request as evidence. Hopefully, this assignment will yield successful results for your library! **(2 classroom library resource applications or letters)**

8. In Chapter 6, the author explains the reading workshop practice of “using short stories, excerpts, or poems to teach literary elements or reading skills, and ask students to apply their understanding to their independent reading books.”

You can begin to build your collection of mentor texts to be used for this purpose.

Children’s picture books make excellent mentor texts for students at all grade levels because of their brief length, rich language, and imagery.

Select 3 mentor texts that you use or plan to use with your students. **Identify the grade level, and literary skill or element to be taught with each. Post a 1 page description of 3 mentor texts, and 1 complete mentor text, typed and ATTACHED as a DOCUMENT on discussion board.** This will create an online library of mentor texts for course participants.

9. Which books are whispering to you? Read books appropriate for your classroom library that you have been waiting to read, but have not had the opportunity before enrolling in this course. Please submit a log that includes for each book, Time Spent Reading, Title, Author, Publisher, Copyright Date, approximate grade and reading level, and a brief statement explaining why you would or would not recommend it. **(Independent Reading Log, available under Course Documents. Post book recommendations or log on discussion board. Required hours vary according to credits: 1 credit = 5 hrs; 2 credits = 10 hrs. 3 credits = 20 hrs.)**

### **Submit Coursework**

Course assignments should be carefully numbered in one or more Word files that may be webposted to the **Assignments Drop Box** at the bottom of the Moodle course page or emailed to your instructor, Kathy at [k@dominicancaonline.com](mailto:k@dominicancaonline.com).

You may submit assignments as you complete them, or all at once.

Label coursework carefully with your name, address, email and phone number as well as the name and number of the course.