

READING UNIVERSE

All About Teaching Reading & Writing



Syllabus 1: Foundations of Evidence-Based Reading Instruction

Part of a Four Model-Course Syllabi
for College and University Faculty

Developed by Dr. Stephanie Stollar

Syllabus 1: Foundations of Evidence-Based Reading Instruction

Educator Preparation Program

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SECTION 1: USING THE SERIES

INTRODUCTION

This Model Course Syllabus is developed for educator preparation programs to support the teaching of evidence-based literacy practices to teacher candidates. It is designed to illustrate how these components of literacy instruction can be integrated into coursework. It is part of a four-course series prepared for Reading Universe by Dr. Stephanie Stollar, consultant, author, and founder of The Reading Science Academy.

SAMPLE COURSE SEQUENCE

	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3	Course 4
Title	Foundations of Evidence-Based Reading Instruction	Teaching Word Recognition	Teaching Language Comprehension	Linking Reading Assessment and Instruction
Credit Hours	3	3	3	3
Duration	15 weeks	15 weeks	15 weeks	15 weeks
Prerequisites	None	Course 1	Course 2	Course 3

You are welcome, and encouraged, to copy and paste this syllabus into your own format for your courses. Organized into a 15-week course, this syllabus includes:

- A course description
- Required student resources
- Weekly objectives aligned to the [International Dyslexia Association Knowledge and Practice Standards](#) (KPS) to ensure teacher candidates have both the knowledge and skills to teach students to read proficiently
- Suggested assignments that align to the weekly topics and objectives. You will find a [Sample Quiz](#) and [Focus Notes Template](#) to use as you design the assignments for the full course.

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SECTION 2: USING COURSE 1 SYLLABUS

DESCRIPTION

This course provides a comprehensive foundation in evidence-based reading instruction grounded in scientific research. You will explore how reading develops through explicit instruction and how learning to read can present challenges for many children, examining the distinctions between proficient and struggling readers, including those with reading disabilities.

Throughout the course, you will use the Simple View of Reading as a framework to analyze reading development, identify instructional needs, and understand reading difficulties. The five essential components of reading instruction — phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension — are discussed in depth, including their interconnected nature and the evidence-based practices that support each component.

You will gain familiarity with evidence-based reading research that informs effective literacy instruction through course readings, along with videos, presentations, and podcasts. By the end of the course, you will be able to explain and demonstrate the key elements of effective reading and writing instruction, preparing you to support diverse learners in developing strong literacy skills.

REQUIRED STUDENT TEXTBOOKS

Honig, B., Diamond, L., & Gutlohn, L. (2018). *Teaching reading sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Arena Press/CORE.

Archer, A. L. & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guilford Press.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, learners will be able to:


1. Understand the importance of scientifically based reading research and different types of research methods/designs.
2. Describe the Simple View of Reading and how it is used to understand reading development, instructional needs, and reading concerns.
3. Understand the evidence that learning to read is a learned skill and is difficult for many children.
4. Describe key characteristics of good and poor readers, including students with reading disabilities.
5. Know the five essential components of reading instruction, their reciprocal nature, and the effective instructional elements involved with each.
6. Explain and demonstrate understanding of the elements of effective reading and writing instruction.

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Week 1: Understanding the Science of Reading

OBJECTIVES

- Identify and explain how environmental, cultural, and social factors contribute to literacy development. **(KPS 1.5)**
- Explain major findings regarding the contribution of linguistic and cognitive factors to the prediction of literacy outcomes. **(KPS 1.6)**
- Understand the general principles of structured literacy and literacy teaching, including explicit, systematic, and cumulative teacher-directed instruction. **(KPS 4A.1)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
<p>Definitions of reading and literacy</p> <p>National reading crisis</p> <p>Gap between research and practice</p> <p>Definition and types of research</p> <p>Science of Reading and evidence-based reading instruction</p>	<p>Reading Universe Empowered by Coaching: Mr. Venia's Journey as a Reading Teacher</p>  <p>Goldberg, M. How Children Learn to Read Reading Universe</p> <p>Leowus, L. What Do the NAEP Reading Scores Mean? Reading Universe</p> <p>The Reading League The Science of Reading: Defining Guide</p>	<p>No assignments for Week 1.</p>


Notes:

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Week 2: Introduction to Structured Literacy

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the five language processing domains of proficient reading and writing: phonological, orthographic, semantic, syntactic, and discourse. **(KPS 1.1)**
- Explain the major research findings regarding the contribution of linguistic and cognitive factors to the prediction of literacy outcomes. **(KPS 1.6)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
<p>Simple View of Reading</p> <p>National Reading Panel (NRP) Report</p> <p>5 essential components of literacy instruction</p> <p>Structured literacy</p>	<p>Honig et al., <i>Teaching Reading Sourcebook</i>, Introduction: "The Big Picture" (p. 1-10)</p> <p>Goldberg, M. What is the Simple View of Reading? Reading Universe</p>  <p>National Institute for Literacy Put Reading First: The Research Building Blocks for Teaching Children to Read Reading Rockets</p> <p>Loewus, L. What is Structured Literacy? Reading Universe</p>	<p>Take Focus Notes for Teaching Reading Sourcebook, "The Big Picture"</p> <p>Quiz</p> <p>Construct a graphic that illustrates the relationship between the Simple View of Reading and the five essential literacy skills from the National Reading Panel report.</p>


Notes:

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Week 3: Understanding the Structure of English

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the changing relationships among the major components of literacy development in accounting for reading achievement. **(KPS 1.9)**
- Understand the rationale for multisensory and multimodal language learning techniques. **(KPS 4A.2)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
<p>Structured literacy (continued)</p> <p>Essential components of reading</p>	<p>Honig et al., <i>Teaching Reading Sourcebook</i>, Chapter 1: "Structure of English" (p. 21-47)</p> <p>Irujo, S. Teaching Reading to English Language Learners Colorín Colorado</p> <p>Cárdenas-Hagan, E. Teaching English Learners: What Every Educator Should Know Reading Universe</p> 	<p>Take focused notes on <i>Teaching Reading Sourcebook</i>, Chapter 1: "Structure of English"</p> <p>Quiz</p>


Notes:

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Week 4: The Development of Literacy

OBJECTIVES

- Know the phases in the typical developmental progression of oral language, phoneme awareness, decoding skills, printed word recognition, spelling, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and written expression. **(KPS 1.8)**
- Explain the major research findings regarding the contribution of linguistic and cognitive factors to the prediction of literacy outcomes. **(KPS 1.6)**
- Understand the most common differences between good and poor readers (i.e., linguistic, cognitive, and neurobiological). **(KPS 1.7)**
- Recognize the tenets of the 2025 International Dyslexia Association (IDA) definition of dyslexia, or any accepted revisions thereof. **(KPS 2.1)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
<p>How the brain learns to read – typical progression</p> <p>What can go wrong while learning to read</p> <p>Differences between good and poor readers</p> <p>Introduction to reading disability, specific learning disability (SLD), dyslexia, developmental language disorder (DLD), and cognitive impairment</p>	<p>Reading Rockets  Reading Rockets What We Know About Reading and the Brain</p> <p>International Dyslexia Association Dyslexia and the Brain</p> <p>Vaughn, S. & Fletcher, J. Identifying and Teaching Students with Significant Reading Problems AFT</p> <p>Spear-Swerling, L. Different Learning Disabilities in Reading Reading Universe</p>	<p>Quiz</p> <p>Draw a model of the brain networks involved in literacy and state why dyslexia makes learning to read and write more difficult.</p>


Notes:

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Week 5: Principles of Effective Reading Instruction

OBJECTIVES

- Understand that most students will require explicit instruction to learn to read. **(KPS 1.2)**
- Identify and explain aspects of cognition and behavior that affect reading and writing development. **(KPS 1.4)**
- Understand the rationale for and adapt instruction to accommodate individual differences in cognitive, linguistic, sociocultural, and behavioral aspects of learning. **(KPS 4A.3)**
- Understand the general principles and practices of structured language and literacy teaching, including explicit, systematic, and cumulative, teacher-directed instruction. **(KPS 4A.1)**
- Know considerations for using multisensory routines to enhance student engagement and memory. **(KPS 4C.4)**


Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
<p>Foundations of explicit instruction</p> <p>How cognitive science informs reading instruction (attention, direct model, practice, feedback, working and long-term memory)</p>	<p>Archer, A. & Hughes, C. <i>Explicit Instruction</i>, Chapter 1: "Exploring the Foundations of Explicit Instruction" (p. 1-22)</p> <p>Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Systematically Design Instruction Toward a Specific Learning Goal</p> <p>CEC Systematic Instruction Video Transcript</p> <p>Kearns, D. Explicit Instruction Explanation</p> <p>Reading Universe Teaching the Short 'u' Sound: Full Lesson</p> 	<p>Take focused notes on <i>Explicit Instruction</i>, Chapter 1: "Exploring the Foundations of Explicit Instruction"</p> <p>Quiz</p> <p>Identify the elements of explicit instruction in the lesson provided by your instructor.</p> <p>Include a rationale for multisensory and multimodal techniques, with reference to brain science, cognitive science, and long-standing clinical practice using these methods.</p>

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Week 13: Supporting Multilingual Learners

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice how to use print and online resources for obtaining information about languages other than English. **(KPS 4B.7)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
<p>Oral language</p> <p>Language variation and second language acquisition</p> <p>Phonemic awareness</p>	<p>Whitehurst, G. Dialogic Reading: An Effective Way to Read Aloud with Young Children Reading Rockets</p> <p>Goldenberg, C. The "Bilingual Brain" and Reading Research: Questions About Teaching English Learners to Read in English Reading Universe</p>  <p>Sensenbaugh, R. ABCs of Phonemic Awareness Reading Rockets</p> <p>Washington, J. Teaching Reading to Children Who Speak African American English Reading Universe</p>	<p>Take focused notes on The "Bilingual Brain" and Reading Research</p> <p>Compare a student's first language phonological system with the phoneme inventory for General American English to anticipate which speech sounds in English are not in the student's native language or dialect and are likely to be challenging for the learner to distinguish and produce.</p>

Notes:

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LIST OF ALL STUDENT READINGS AND MEDIA ASSIGNMENTS

- Archer, A. L. & Hughes, C. A. (n.d). *Active participation instruction: 2nd grade* [Video]. Explicit Instruction.
<https://explicitinstruction.org/video-elementary/elementary-video-1/>
- Archer, A. L. & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guilford Press.
- Cárdenas-Hagan, E. (2025, January 9). *Teaching English learners: What every educator should know* [Video]. Reading Universe.
<https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/big-picture/teaching-english-learners-what-every-educator-should-know-with-elsa-cardenas-hagan-ed-d>
- Council for Exceptional Children. (2019, April 22). *Systematically design instruction toward a specific learning goal* [Video]. YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqD_GpYJ2rY
- Goldberg, M. (2023, September 12). *How children learn to read, with Margaret Goldberg* [Video]. Reading Universe.
<https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/big-picture/how-children-learn-to-read-article>
- Goldberg, M. (2024, July 26). *What is the simple view of reading?* [Video]. Reading Universe.
<https://readinguniverse.org/resources/video/big-picture/what-is-the-simple-view-of-reading>
- Goldenberg, C. (n.d.). *The 'bilingual brain' and reading research: Questions about teaching English Learners to read in English*. Reading Universe.
<https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/big-picture/the-bilingual-brain-and-reading-research-questions-about-teaching-english-learners-to-read-in-english>
- Honig, B., Diamond, L., & Gutlohn, L. (2018). *Teaching reading sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Arena Press/CORE.
- International Dyslexia Association. (2020). *Dyslexia and the brain*.
<https://dyslexiaida.org/dyslexia-and-the-brain/>
- Irujo, S. (n.d.). *What does the research tell us about teaching reading to English Language Learners?* Colorín Colorado.
<https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/what-does-research-tell-us-about-teaching-reading-english-language-learners>
- Kearns, D. (2018, Nov. 29). *Explicit instruction explanation* [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rarD6Rk2uE>
- Lambert, S. (Host). (2021, April 21). *Deconstructing the rope: Language comprehension with Sonia Cabell (S3-08)* [Audio podcast episode]. In *Science of Reading: The Podcast*. Amplify.
<https://www.buzzsprout.com/612361/episodes/8334638-s3-08-deconstructing-the-rope-language-comprehension-with-sonia-cabell>
- Loewus, L. (n.d.). *What do the NAEP reading scores mean?* Reading Universe.
<https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/big-picture/what-do-the-naep-reading-scores-mean>

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LIST OF ALL STUDENT READINGS AND MEDIA ASSIGNMENTS, CONTINUED

Loewus, L. (n.d.). *What is structured literacy?* Reading Universe.

<https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/features-of-structured-literacy-instruction/what-is-structured-literacy>

Michigan's Mission: Literacy. (n.d.). *Concepts of print: Ideas for teachers.* Reading Rockets.

<https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/print-awareness/articles/concepts-print-ideas-teachers>

Morrison, V. & Wheeler, L. (2009). *Revisiting read alouds: Instructional strategies that encourage students' engagement with text.* Reading Rockets.

<https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/comprehension/articles/revisiting-read-alouds-instructional-strategies-encourage-students>

National Institute for Literacy. (n.d.). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read.* Reading Rockets.

<https://www.readingrockets.org/resources/resource-library/put-reading-first-research-building-blocks-teaching-children-read>

Reading Rockets. (n.d.) *Assessment: In depth.*

<https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/reading-101-learning-modules/course-modules/assessment/depth#types-of-assessments>

Reading Rockets. (n.d.) *Evidence-based instruction in an MTSS framework.*

<https://www.readingrockets.org/classroom/evidence-based-instruction>

Reading Rockets. (n.d.) *What we know about reading and the brain.*

<https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/how-children-learn-read/reading-brain>

Reading Universe. (2024, December 19). *Empowered by coaching: Mr. Venia's journey as a reading teacher* [Video]. Reading Universe.

<https://readinguniverse.org/resources/video/features-of-structured-literacy-instruction/empowered-by-coaching-mr-venias-journey-as-a-reading-teacher>

Reading Universe. (n.d.) *Four-step assessment decision chart.*

<https://readinguniverse.org/resources/pdf/assessment/assessment-decision-chart-informed-by-the-simple-view-of-reading>

Reading Universe. (2024, April 16). *Teaching the short 'u' sound: Full lesson* [Video]. Reading Universe.

<https://readinguniverse.org/resources/video/phonics-patterns/short-vowels-skill-explainer/teaching-the-short-u-sound-full-lesson>

Robertson, K. & Ford, K. (n.d.). *Language acquisition: An overview.* Colorín Colorado.

<https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/language-acquisition-overview>

Sensenbaugh, R. (1996). *ABCs of phonemic awareness.* Reading Rockets.

<https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/phonological-and-phonemic-awareness/articles/abcs-phonemic-awareness>

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LIST OF ALL STUDENT READINGS AND MEDIA ASSIGNMENTS, CONTINUED

Spear-Swerling, L. (n.d.). *Different learning disabilities in reading*. Reading Universe.

<https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/features-of-structured-literacy-instruction/different-learning-disabilities-in-reading>

The Reading League. (2026, February, 6). *Science of Reading: Defining Guide*.

<https://www.thereadingleague.org/what-is-thescience-of-reading/>

Vaughn, S. & Fletcher, J. (2020). Identifying and teaching students with significant reading problems. *American Educator*, 44(4), 4–11, 40.

https://www.aft.org/ae/winter2020-2021/vaughn_fletcher

Washington, J. (2023, November 10). *Teaching African American children to read* [Video]. Reading Universe.

<https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/big-picture/teaching-african-american-children-to-read-timely-talk>

Whitehurst, G. (n.d.). *Dialogic reading: An effective way to read aloud with young children*. Reading Rockets.

<https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/early-literacy-development/articles/dialogic-reading-effective-way-read-aloud-young-children>

*Knowledge and Practice Standards (KPS) <https://www.readingrockets.org/resources/resource-library/knowledge-and-practice-standards-teaching-reading>

Focus Notes for *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*, "The Big Picture"

Focus Question	Response/Notes
How does understanding the "big picture" of the components of reading impact my ability to effectively teach reading?	
Define the reading deficit.	
What are the big ideas of how the brain learns to read?	
What are the elements of a "scientific" approach to reading instruction?	
What are the components of effective reading instruction?	
How is reading assessment related to reading instruction?	

Focused Notes Template

Focus Question	Response/Notes

Sample Quizzes

Questions for Demonstrating Retrieval Practice and Cumulative Review for Weeks 2, 3, and 4

WEEK 2 QUIZ

1. In 2000, the National Reading Panel established the five essential components of reading. They are phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and what?

a. Fluency

b. Word knowledge

c. Orthographic knowledge

d. Print awareness

2. The process of learning to read is natural, like learning to speak.

a. True

b. False

3. Decoding x _____ = Reading Comprehension

Language Comprehension

4. Recall as many elements of the definition of the science of reading as you can.

Sample Retrieval Quizzes

Questions for Demonstrating Retrieval Practice and Cumulative Review for Weeks 2, 3, and 4

WEEK 3 QUIZ

1. Which of the following is NOT one of the five essential components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel report.

- a. Phonics
- b. Vocabulary
- c. Concepts of Print
- d. Reading Comprehension

2. A student's language skills in one language are an asset when learning another language.

- a. True
- b. False

3. Effective instruction, and structured literacy, are defined by an incidental learning approach in which students are exposed to concepts and learn new skills as they become developmentally appropriate for each child.

- a. True
- b. False

4. List 3 ways Spanish and English are related.

5. List 4 recommendations from the Executive Summary of the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Youth.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____

Sample Retrieval Quizzes

Questions for Demonstrating Retrieval Practice and Cumulative Review for Weeks 2, 3, and 4

WEEK 4 QUIZ

1. Dyslexia is: (Check all that apply.)

- a specific learning disability
- neurobiological in origin
- characterized by reading difficulties
- challenged by fluent word recognition

2. A student's language skills in one language are an asset when learning another language.

a. True

b. False

3. List and define the five components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel Report.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

4. List the 4 regions of the brain that are related to reading.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

5. Explain why teaching cognates supports English Learners.
