READING UNIVERSE

All About Teaching Reading & Writing

Syllabus 3: Teaching Language Comprehension

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

Developed by Dr. Stephanie Stollar

Syllabus 3: Teaching Language Comprehension
Educator Preparation Program

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SECTION 1: USING THE SERIES

INTRODUCTION

This model 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 syllabus 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 **Focus Notes Template** to use as you design the assignments for the full course.

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SECTION 2: USING COURSE 2 SYLLABUS

DESCRIPTION

This course provides a comprehensive exploration of the essential components that enable proficient reading and writing. Using the Simple View of Reading as a foundational framework, you will examine how skilled readers develop and the instructional implications related to fluency, morphology, vocabulary, and comprehension. Through the use of evidence-based practices, you will gain expertise in explicitly teaching the skills needed for reading comprehension. You will also utilize instructional interventions that address the language comprehension skills critical for reading success.

Throughout this course, you will discover how to leverage reading and writing instruction to enhance content area literacy. Principles of explicit and systematic instruction to develop written expression will be discussed. By the end of the course, you will be equipped to teach accurate and fluent text reading, implement evidence-based vocabulary and comprehension instruction, and support students' development as writers.

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. Use the Simple View of Reading to explain reading development and difficulties.

2. Summarize the phases of reading development that lead to proficient reading and writing, and plan instruction that is appropriate to each level of development.

3. Understand and be able to summarize the traits of a skilled comprehender.

4. Explain the key terminology and demonstrate understanding of research findings and instructional strategies for teaching reading, including morphology, vocabulary, comprehension, and writing.

5. Explain the relationships between fluent word reading, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension.

6. Identify and apply robust assessment, instruction, and interventions to address the language comprehension skills needed for reading comprehension.

7. Describe the benefit of directly teaching accurate and fluent text reading, vocabulary, and comprehension skills in the reading process to all children, including children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

8. Use reading and writing instruction to promote content area literacy.

9. Understand the research-based practices to support students' independent writing.

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Week 1: Supporting Fluency Instruction

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for varied techniques and methods for building reading fluency. **(4D.2)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Building text reading fluency	Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook,* Chapter 10: "Fluency Instruction" (p. 359–367)	No assignments for Week 1.

Notes:

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Week 2: Fluency Development

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for text reading fluency as a stage of normal reading development that can be advanced through informed instruction and progress-monitoring practices. **(4D.3)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for appropriate uses of assistive technology for students with serious limitations in reading fluency. **(4D.4)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Effective text reading fluency instruction	Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook,* Chapter 10: "Fluency Instruction" (p. 374–391) Cárdenas-Hagan, E. **Language Development Within a Reading Fluency Lesson** Reading Universe 	Take **focused notes** for Teaching Reading Sourcebook: Chapter 10 Quiz Describe the role of and appropriate use of independent silent reading, assisted reading, repeated reading, and integrated fluency instruction to promote fluent reading.

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Week 3: Vocabulary Development

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role of vocabulary development and vocabulary knowledge in oral and written language comprehension. **(4E.1)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the sources of wide differences in students' vocabularies. **(4E.2)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Define vocabulary Understand why vocabulary is important Know how vocabulary relates to other components State implications for teaching vocabulary to diverse learners Recognize the elements of vocabulary instruction	Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*, "Vocabulary Introduction" (p. 407–418) Melissa & Lori Love Literacy **Ep. 156: Science of Reading Beyond Phonics: Vocabulary Instruction with Sean Morrisey** Colorín Colorado **The Components of Effective Vocabulary Instruction** Melissa & Lori Love Literacy **Ep. 152: Science of Reading for ALL Students: Multilingual Learners with Claude Goldenberg** Justice, L. **Vocabulary Improvement to Fuel Reading Comprehension: Current State-of-Evidence Best Practices** 2020 PaTTAN Literacy Symposium Colorín Colorado **Using Cognates to Develop Comprehension in English**	Take Focus Notes for *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*: Vocabulary Introduction Quiz Identify and summarize the evidence that knowledge of word meanings is a major factor in language comprehension and expression.

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Week 4: Vocabulary Instruction

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role and characteristics of indirect (contextual) methods of vocabulary instruction. **(4E.3)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role and characteristics of direct, explicit methods of vocabulary instruction. **(4E.4)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Effective vocabulary instruction – direct and indirect	Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*, Chapter 11: "Specific Word Instruction" (p. 419–443) Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*, Chapter 12: "Word-Learning Strategies" (p. 487–505)	Take Focus Notes for *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*: Chapter 11 Quiz Select 3-5 vocabulary words to directly teach from a text provided by your instructor.

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Week 5: Developmental Phases of Writing

OBJECTIVES

- Understand the major skill domains that contribute to written expression. **(4G.1)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the developmental phases of the writing process. **(4G.4)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Linking vocabulary instruction to writing instruction	Archer, A. & Hughes, C. *Explicit Instruction*, Chapter 3: "Designing Lessons – Vocabulary and Concepts" (p. 53-91) Sedita, J. **What Is the Writing Rope?** Reading Universe 	Take focused notes on *Explicit Instruction*: Chapter 3 Quiz Recognize and explain the interdependence of transcription skills and written composition in enabling students to become more proficient in reading and writing.

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Week 6: Morphology Instruction

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for research-based principles for teaching written spelling and punctuation. **(4G.3)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Define morphology Show how morphology relates to other components State implications for teaching morphology Recognize the elements of effective morphology instruction	Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*, Chapter 12: "Word-Learning Strategies" (p. 527–540) Van Cleave, W. **Morphology Matters: Using Bases & Affixes to Develop Vocabulary in Students of All Ages** 2020 PaTTAN Literacy Symposium	Take focused notes on *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*: Chapter 12 Quiz Using text provided by your instructor, implement sentence expansion and sentence combining procedures.

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Week 7: Comprehension Instruction

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for factors that contribute to deep comprehension. **(4F.1)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Define reading comprehension Understand why reading comprehension is important Show how reading comprehension relates to other components State implications for teaching reading comprehension to diverse learners Recognize the elements of effective reading comprehension instruction	Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*, "Comprehension Introduction" (p. 607–631)	Take focused notes on *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*: Comprehension Introduction Quiz Cite the evidence that writing in response to reading helps both reading comprehension and quality of writing.

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Week 8: Syntax for Reading and Writing

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role of sentence comprehension in listening and reading comprehension. **(4F.1)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Define syntax State the role of syntax in reading comprehension and proficient writing	Baker et al., **Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School** Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Graham, S. **Effective Writing Instruction** Reading Rockets Sedita, J. **Teaching Children to Write Well** Reading Universe Reading Universe **Introducing Sentence Expansion** Reading Universe **Writing Stronger Sentences - 3-Part Series**	Take focused notes on IES Guide Quiz Using material provided by your instructor, complete sentence stems using *because*, *but*, and *so*.

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Week 9: Explicit Comprehension Instruction

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the use of explicit comprehension strategy instruction, as supported by research. **(4F.4)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Define content knowledge and background knowledge State the role of content knowledge in skilled reading comprehension and writing	Amplify Science of Reading: The Podcast **Deconstructing the Rope: Background Knowledge with Susan Neuman** Neuman, S., et al., **Building Background Knowledge** Reading Rockets 	Take focused notes on Amplify Podcast Quiz Outline the research on teaching comprehension strategies.

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Week 10: The Skilled Comprehender

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the teacher's role as an active mediator of the text comprehension processes. **(4F.5)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Define inferencing and questioning State the role of inferencing in skilled reading and writing	Hennessey, N. **Inference: More Than Filling the Gap** 2020 PaTTAN Literacy Symposium Sigueza, T. **Using Graphic Organizers With English Learners** Colorín Colorado 	Take focused notes on Hennessey Presentation Quiz Articulate the value of comprehension instruction that addresses all major contributors to this domain, including background knowledge, vocabulary, verbal reasoning ability, sentence processing, knowledge of literary structures and conventions, and skills and strategies for close reading of text.

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Week 11: Understanding the Reading/Writing Connection

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for factors that contribute to deep comprehension. **(4F.1)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Define summarization State role of summarization in skilled reading comprehension and writing Learn how to teach summarization through paragraph shrinking or "get the gist"	Shanahan, T. **How To Teach Summarization** Reading Rockets Kemeny, L. **Class-wide Intervention That Works** 2022 PaTTAN Literacy Symposium	Take focused notes on Kemeny Presentation Quiz Anticipate challenging language before text reading and prepare to decipher it with students.

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Week 12: Content Area Reading and Writing

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for instructional routines appropriate for each major genre: informational text, narrative text, and argumentation. **(4F.2)**

Topics	Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Teaching reading comprehension across genres and content areas	Honig et al., *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*, Chapter 15: "Informational Text" (p. 681–687) Wijekumar, K. & Beerwinkle, A. **Implementing the Text Structure Strategy in Your Classroom** Reading Rockets 	Take focused notes on *Teaching Reading Sourcebook*: Chapter 15 Quiz Given a specific text, identify the cohesive devices (e.g., pronoun referents, word substitutions, and transition words) that are important for comprehension.

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Week 13: Implementation in the Classroom

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the use of explicit comprehension strategy instruction, as supported by research. **(4F.4)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for varied techniques and methods for building reading fluency. **(4D.2)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role and characteristics of indirect (contextual) methods of vocabulary instruction. **(4E.3)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role and characteristics of direct, explicit methods of vocabulary instruction. **(4E.4)**

Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Videos and instructional resources from **Text Project's Core Vocabulary** or **LARRC's Let's Know** program Classroom or video observation and/or practice	Observation Reflection Quiz Annotate an explicit comprehension lesson provided by your instructor.

Note: Weeks 13-15 do not contain topics as they are designed to allow for field experience/observations. If you teach online or if you are unable to observe within a school, you may need to use video observations. You may also choose to space this out throughout the semester and redistribute topics into these weeks.

Notes:

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Week 14: Implementation in the Classroom

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the use of explicit comprehension strategy instruction, as supported by research. **(4F.4)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for varied techniques and methods for building reading fluency. **(4D.E)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role and characteristics of indirect (contextual) methods of vocabulary instruction. **(4E.3)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role and characteristics of direct, explicit methods of vocabulary instruction. **(4E.4)**

Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Classroom or video observation and/or practice	Observation Reflection Quiz

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Week 15: Implementation in the Classroom

OBJECTIVES

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the use of explicit comprehension strategy instruction, as supported by research. **(4F.4)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for varied techniques and methods for building reading fluency. **(4D.2)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role and characteristics of indirect (contextual) methods of vocabulary instruction. **(4E.3)**

- Know and apply in practice considerations for the role and characteristics of direct, explicit methods of vocabulary instruction. **(4E.4)**

Readings and Other Media	Assignments Due This Week
Classroom or video observation and/or practice	Observation Reflection Final Exam

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LIST OF ALL STUDENT READINGS AND MEDIA ASSIGNMENTS

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

Baker, S., Lesaux, N., Jayanthi, M., Dimino, J., Proctor, C. P., Morris, J., Gersten, R., Haymond, K., Kieffer, M. J., Linan-Thompson, S., & Newman-Gonchar, R. (2014). *Teaching academic content and literacy to English learners in elementary and middle school* (NCEE 2014-4012). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from the NCEE website: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications_reviews.aspx.

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Hennessy, N. (2020, August 20). *Inference: More than filling in the gaps* [Presentation]. PaTTAN Literacy Symposium, Pennsylvania. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZCQ1jUXs5eo&list=PLCkBP2csbOstdctu-RbK9XMYkxug4BU3P&index=67

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

Justice, L. (2020, July 13). *Vocabulary improvement to fuel reading comprehension: Current state-of-evidence best practices* [Presentation]. PaTTAN Literacy Symposium, Pennsylvania. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwPgNi2Qhvo&list=PLCkBP2csbOstdctu-RbK9XMYkxug4BU3P&index=14

Kemeny, L. (2022, August 26). *A classwide reading intervention that works* [Presentation]. PaTTAN Literacy Symposium, Pennsylvania. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Q3iO_NUCPI&t=121s

Lambert, S. (Host). (2021, March 24). Deconstructing the rope: Background knowledge with Susan Neuman (S3-06) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Science of Reading: The Podcast*. Amplify. https://www.buzzsprout.com/612361/episodes/8166869-s3-06-deconstructing-the-rope-background-knowledge-with-susan-neuman

Language and Reading Research Consortium. (2013) *Let's Know!* [Program of Studies]. https://larrc.ehe.osu.edu/curriculum/

Loftus, M. & Sappington, L. (Hosts). (2023, July 28). Science of reading beyond phonics: Vocabulary instruction with a grade 5 teacher (Ep. 156) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Melissa & Lori Love Literacy*. Great Minds. https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/ep-156-science-of-reading-beyond-phonics-vocabulary/id1463219123?i=1000622619798

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LIST OF ALL STUDENT READINGS AND MEDIA ASSIGNMENTS, CONTINUED

Loftus, M. & Sappington, L. (Hosts). (2023, June 30). Science of reading for all students: Multilingual learners with Claude Goldenberg (Ep. 152) [Audio podcast episode]. In *Melissa & Lori Love Literacy*. Great Minds. **https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/ep-152-science-of-reading-for-all-students/id1463219123?i=1000618848980**

Neuman, S., Kaefer, T., & Pinkham, A. (n.d.). *Building background knowledge*. Reading Rockets. **https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/background-knowledge/articles/building-background-knowledge**

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Sedita, J. (2025, December 10). *Teaching students to write well* [Video]. Reading Universe. **https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/writing/teaching-children-to-write-well-with-joan-sedita-m-ed**

Sedita, J. (2024, May 7). *What is the writing rope?* Reading Universe. **https://readinguniverse.org/article/explore-teaching-topics/writing/what-is-the-writing-rope**

Shanahan, T. (2019, July 15). *How to teach summarizing: Part 1*. Reading Rockets. **https://www.readingrockets.org/blogs/shanahan-on-literacy/how-teach-summarizing-part-i**

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Van Cleave, W. (2020, August 20). *Morphology matters: Using bases & affixes to develop vocabulary in students of all ages* [Presentation]. PaTTAN Literacy Symposium, Pennsylvania. **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUjfj3WHU4Q&list=PLCkBP2csbOstdctu-RbK9XMYkxug4BU3P&index=43**

Wijekumar, K. & Beerwinkle, A. *Implementing the text structure strategy in your classroom*. Reading Rockets. **https://www.readingrockets.org/topics/comprehension/articles/implementing-text-structure-strategy-your-classroom**

Focused Notes Template

Focus Question	Response/Notes