

Title

Teaching Narrative and Expository Text Comprehension (Grades 4-6)

Target Audience

This course is intended for pre-service and in-service teachers of grades 4-6.

Prerequisites

To successfully participate and complete the assignments in this course, the learner must:

- Have access to a classroom or a few students in grades 4-6 to try out the strategies and the lesson plans.
- Be familiar with taking an online course or have completed the PBS “Practice Learning Online with TeacherLine” course.
- Have some experience in grades 4-6 classrooms.
- Have an interest in language, literacy, and comprehension instruction.

Course Description

This course provides learners with an array of practical strategies for supporting students’ comprehension of narrative, expository, and multi-genre texts. Learners will strengthen their knowledge of the factors that affect a student’s comprehension, the impact of genre on comprehension, and strategies for assessing students’ comprehension. They will examine collaborative learning techniques that support students’ comprehension. As part of the course experience, learners will apply theory to practice by working with students in grades 4-6. By the end of the course, learners will be able to develop lesson plans that use a collaborative approach to teaching a comprehension skill or strategy, develop lesson plans for direct instruction of a comprehension skill, and design reading guides or text maps based on current research.

Instructor/Facilitator

See instructor/facilitator sheet

Credits

To be determined by college or university

Goals

The overall goal for this course is for teachers to develop an understanding of important research about text comprehension in grades 4-6 and to learn an array of practical strategies for supporting students’ comprehension.

At the end of this course, the learner will understand and be able to apply the following in his or her own classroom:

- The instructional implications of the many factors affecting students’ comprehension in grades 4-6.
- Active comprehension strategies used by good readers and a range of practical, effective techniques for teaching them.
- Collaborative learning techniques that support students’ comprehension.



- How to support the comprehension of the diverse needs of students.
- A variety of ways to assess students' comprehension.
- How find an Internet-based collaborative reading project.

Learner Outcomes (performance based)

Learners completing Teaching Narrative and Expository Comprehension (grades 4-6) will be able to:

- Align their state's standards to the NCTE/IRA standards, and list any instructional strategies they have used to meet each of the standards.
- Develop a lesson plan for direct instruction of a comprehension skill.
- Design a reading guide or text map based on current research in the course readings.
- Develop a lesson plan that uses a collaborative approach to teaching a comprehension skill or strategy.
- Create a think-aloud for a diverse student, administer it, and analyze the experience.
- Design and complete a presentation about reading comprehension in grades 4-6 for colleagues.

Outline of Content and Assignments

After previewing the documents in the Course Information area, learners will proceed to the Course Content area to complete the following six sessions, working through each session in order. Throughout the sessions, learners are asked to articulate their ideas in various forms: they are encouraged to reflect on their ideas and experiences in their online journal; the weekly discussions in the discussion forum are designed to allow learners to glean information from other learners' experiences. As a final project, learners will design and complete an outline intended for a presentation to the IRA about reading comprehension in grades 4-6. This presentation should focus on one particular aspect of the course material, contain at least one plan for an activity in which your audience participates, and include handouts for the presentation's participants. Students are expected to post their outlines on the discussion board, receive feedback from peers, revise the presentation according to the feedback, and write a reflection paper on the presentation's development.

This course is designed to address the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and International Reading Association (IRA) Standards for the English Language Arts that were developed to serve as a guide for teachers in developing curriculum and instruction that foster students' literacy development. The course specifically addresses Standards 1, 2, and 3. In Session 1 of this course, learners will read the applicable NCTE/IRA standards. Learners will also study how their own state's standards address text comprehension.

Additionally, this course addresses several of the ISTE NETS*T for teachers, including:

- Use of technology to enhance the curriculum.
- Use of technology to assess student learning.
- Use of technology resources to engage in ongoing professional development and lifelong learning.
- Continually evaluate and reflect on professional practice to make informed decisions regarding the use of technology in support of student learning.
- Use of technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, parents, and the larger community in order to nurture student learning.

Session 1: Key Theoretical Concepts in Text Comprehension

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

- Define professional goals and expectations for this course in the online journal.

- Explain prior knowledge and experiences about teaching narrative and expository comprehension in the online journal.
- Analyze the theoretical model of the reading process presented in the articles “Teaching Reading Comprehension” and “Rethinking Reading Comprehension” by listing at least three “outside the head,” three “inside the head,” and two text factors that affect students’ comprehension.
- Demonstrate understanding of factors related to students’ comprehension difficulties at or near the fourth-grade level through online discussion.
- Evaluate their own instructional practices with respect to NCTE/IRA standards and local state’s standards by completing a graphic organizer.

Read

- “Factors Influencing Reading Comprehension,” from the book, *Teaching Reading Comprehension*
- “Reading for Comprehension,” from the book, *Rethinking Reading Comprehension*
- NCTE/IRA Standards 1, 2, and 3
- Standards related to text comprehension (grades 4-6) from the learner’s own state.

Write in online journal

- Reflect on professional goals and expectations for the course; also think about how this learning experience might shape future instruction.
- Explain prior knowledge and experiences about teaching text comprehension to students and any techniques that were used.
- List three “outside the head,” three “inside the head,” and two text strategies learned about in the reading and think about how these factors might be helpful in classroom instruction.

Participate in an online discussion

- Introduce themselves to other learners.
- Respond to the questions:
 - Why do you think some students experience comprehension difficulty at or around fourth grade?
 - Discuss some of the specific factors related to students’ comprehension difficulties.

Complete activities and assignments

- Complete Standards Alignment assignment.

Additional Resources (not required)

- Reading and Language from PBS Parents
- Grade-by-Grade Learning in 4th and 5th Grade from PBS Parents
- Why Some Children Have Difficulties Learning to Read from Reading Rockets
- Basics of Reading from Misunderstood Minds
- The Challenge of Standards from Frontline: Testing Our Schools
- Testing. Teaching. Learning? from Frontline: Testing Our Schools
- Parents’ Guide to Standardized Testing from Colorín Colorado

Session 2: Teaching Active Comprehension Strategies

By the end of this session, the learner will be able to:

- List three strategies that good readers use to facilitate their comprehension and explain how teachers will recognize which strategies students are using in the online journal.
- Explain the importance of techniques for direct instruction of comprehension strategies through online discussion.
- Synthesize learning about direct instruction and strategic reading by designing a lesson plan.

Read

- “Effective Practices for Developing Reading Comprehension,” pp. 205-206 from the book, *What Research Has to Say about Reading Instruction*
- “Our Students Are Ready for This: Comprehension Instruction in the Elementary School,” from *The Reading Teacher*

Write in online journal

- List at least three strategies that good readers use to facilitate their comprehension, discuss which of these strategies students tend to use most/least, and state how you know (or will know) what strategies students are using.

Participate in an online discussion

- Respond to the research of Durkin and discuss the following question: What is the importance of direct instruction in comprehension strategies for students in grades 4-6?

Complete activities and assignments

- View “Making Inferences” videos 1 and 2.
- Develop a Lesson Plan for Direct Instruction.

Additional Resources (not required)

- Metacognition from NcREL
- Reading Responses from Misunderstood Minds
- “A Comprehension Checklist: What if it Doesn't Make Sense?” from *The Reading Teacher*
- History Detectives: It's Not Conjecture, Look! It's Architecture lesson plan from PBS
- NewsHour Extra: Vanishing Verbs lesson plan from PBS
- What Classroom Observations Reveal about Reading Comprehension Instruction from *Reading Research Quarterly*
- Strengthening Reading and Writing Skills Using the Internet from Scholastic

Session 3: Teaching Students to Comprehend Expository and Multi-Genre Text

By the end of this session, the learner will be able to:

- Design and implement a reading guide for an expository text to demonstrate an understanding of the expository text structure presented in the excerpt, “Content Reading and Literacy.”
- Describe and discuss how reading guides may help students read complicated texts.
- Evaluate the utility of multi-genre texts in the online journal.

Read

- An excerpt from *Content Reading and Literacy*
- “Text Maps: Helping Students Navigate Informational Texts,” from *The Reading Teacher*
- “Developing Strategic Use of Combined-Text Trade Books,” from *The Reading Teacher*

Write in online journal

- Think about the benefits and potential limitations of multi-genre texts.

Participate in an online discussion

- Respond to the following question: How does a “road map” help students comprehend expository text, and does a “road map” always work?

Complete activities and assignments

- Begin the Text Map/Reading Guide assignment; implement it with a class. Complete by the end of Session 5.
- Explore the Text Structures interactive.

Additional Resources (not required)

- Introducing a Text Before Reading from Colorín Colorado
- Reading Comprehension Strategies for Content Learning from Colorín Colorado
- Web cast: Reading to Learn: ELLs in Grades 4-6 from Colorín Colorado
- The Most Dangerous Woman in America: Disease Detective from PBS Kids
- Get the Scoop from PBS from PBS Kids
- Compare and Contrast with the H-Map from PBS Kids
- Secret Character Game from PBS Kids
- The Story Map from PBS Kids
- Brainstorming Ideas from PBS Kids
- Somebody/Wanted/But/So Then from PBS Kids

Session 4: Collaborative Approaches to Comprehension Instruction

By the end of this session, the learner will be able to:

- Analyze the potential obstacles to using collaborative approaches through online discussion.
- Describe how to use the collaborative approaches to comprehension instruction and explain the challenges involved when implementing them in the classroom in the online journal.
- Apply collaborative approaches to comprehension instruction by designing a lesson plan that uses the Internet as a tool for communication.

Read

- “Collaborative Approaches to Comprehension Instruction, Part 1,” from the book, *Rethinking Reading Comprehension*
- “Collaborative Approaches to Comprehension Instruction, Part 2,” from the book, *Rethinking Reading Comprehension*
- *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom*
- “Teacher’s Guide to International Collaboration on the Internet”

Write in online journal

- Think about the strategies discussed in the reading concerning collaborative approaches. What might be the challenges to using these methods? What might work in your own classroom?

Participate in an online discussion

- Respond to the question:
 - What difficulties have you encountered or could you imagine encountering in using collaborative techniques to improve students’ comprehension of narrative and expository text, and how have you overcome them or imagine overcoming them?

Complete activities and assignments

- View the “Growing Talk, Literature Circles” (Part 1), and “Literature Circles” (Part 2) videos.
- Explore the suggested Web sites for telecollaborative projects.
- Find one telecollaborative project and post a description of it in the discussion forum (not required)

Additional Resources (not required)

- Cooperative Learning Strategies from Colorín Colorado
- Literature Circles from Colorín Colorado
- Children and Media from PBS Parents
- Get Your Web License from PBS Kids
- LiteratureCircles.com

Session 5: Supporting Diverse Students

By the end of this session, the learner will be able to:

- Analyze the challenges one might face in assessing and building comprehension for a diverse student population on the discussion board.
- Analyze the impact of cultural differences on text comprehension in the online journal.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Language Experience Approach for culturally diverse students in the online journal.
- Analyze one student's strengths and weaknesses in reading comprehension by completing a think-aloud procedure.

Read

- “The Reading Comprehension Development and Instruction of English-Language Learners,” from the book, *Rethinking Reading Comprehension*
- “Cross-Cultural Schemata and Reading Comprehension,” from the book, *Literacy Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*
- “Using the Experience-Text Relationship Method with Minority Children,” from the book, *Literacy Instruction for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students*
- “Using Think-Alouds to Assess Comprehension,” from *The Reading Teacher*

Write in online journal

- Discuss how cultural differences in general can affect text comprehension, based on the information from the articles in this session.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Language Experience Approach for culturally diverse students.

Participate in an online discussion

- Respond to and discuss: What challenges do you think you might face in both assessing and building the comprehension of any or all of the three groups of diverse students on which we focus?

Complete activity and assignment

- Complete the think-aloud assignment and implement with a student by the end of Session 6.

Additional Resources (not required)

- “Creating Programs for Language Minority Families” from Colorín Colorado
- “Family Literacy Night” from Colorín Colorado
- Helping Your Child Succeed: Helpful PreK-12 Tips from Colorín Colorado
- Letter for Parents – Printable Archive from PBS Teachers
- Misunderstood Minds from PBS
- Think Aloud Protocols: Teaching Reading Processes to Young Bilingual Students
- How to Develop a Lesson Plan that Includes ELLs from Colorín Colorado

Session 6: Concluding Thoughts and Ideas

By the end of this session, the learner will be able to:

- Assess learning in this course by comparing prior knowledge and acquired knowledge in the online journal.
- Analyze the learning experience in this course by reflecting on professional goals and expectations in the online journal.
- Synthesize learning about text comprehension by developing a conference presentation plan and writing a reflection paper.

Complete assignment



- Complete final project: conference presentation plan and reflection paper

Write in online journal

- Reflect on professional goals and expectations
- Reflect on acquired knowledge

Schedule

It will take about 30 hours to complete this course. Each session should take approximately 4-5 hours. If you find yourself spending several hours more than this in any given session, please contact your facilitator to make sure this is necessary to complete the given assignments.

Requirements

Learners are expected to:

- Complete all assignments.
- Maintain an online journal.
- Participate and actively engage in discussions with fellow learners while contributing to the social construction of knowledge.
- Be self-directed and self-motivated.
- Ask for assistance when they need it.

Materials (hardware, software, plug-ins)

Technical Requirements

- Word processor
- Internet service provider
- E-mail

Academic Dishonesty Policy

To be inserted by university institution only

Evaluation

This course is evaluated on a letter grade basis, and may be available for graduate credit. See graduate credit details pertaining to specific graduate credit institutions.