TE 842: Elementary Reading Assessment and Instruction
Spring 2012

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Course Overview

TE842 is a masters level course on the teaching and learning of reading at the elementary school level. The course is designed with the assumption that all or nearly all of those in attendance have a current or recent teaching context to consider when completing assignments, participating in class discussions and so on. If this is not the case for you, please try to arrange to volunteer in a classroom or other educational context during the course. Please contact me if you need help arranging this.

The purpose of this course is to develop (further) expertise in the teaching of reading at the elementary school level and to foster the translation of that expertise into tangible improvements in your teaching of reading. This course will likely serve as affirmation for many aspects of your teaching of reading. At the same time, the course should also uncover aspects of your teaching of reading that you can improve. Thus*, I want you to leave the course being able to point to specific improvements you have made in your teaching of reading over the course of the semester as well as to identify areas and plans for further improvement.*

Throughout the semester, we will focus on the characteristics of effective reading instruction as identified by respected reading researchers and exemplary reading teachers. This course is divided into eight modules. Topics for the modules are as follows:

1. Overview of Effective Reading Instruction and Assessment
2. Contextualizing U.S. Elementary Reading Instruction Today
3. Effective Comprehension Teaching: Strategy Instruction & Text Discussion
4. Effective Instruction of Foundational Knowledge and Skills: Fluency
5. Effective Instruction of Foundational Knowledge and Skills: Vocabulary & Morphology
6. Effective Instruction of Foundational Knowledge and Skills: Phonological Awareness & Phonics
7. Effective Reading Instruction: Motivation, Engagement, & Contexts
8. Putting It All Together: Designing Exemplary Elementary Reading Instruction

In an effort to minimize redundancy between this course and others offered within the Masters in Literacy Instruction Program and to make more manageable the amount of material to be addressed in this course, you will notice that there are a number of topics that this course does not address directly in a substantial way. These include the topics of working with families,

reading processes specific to English Language learners and bilingual learners, reading disabilities, and children's literature. This is not because these areas are not vitally important to the teaching of reading, but because they are addressed in other courses in the Masters in Literacy Instruction Program. Nonetheless, TE842 students may choose to involve these areas in more substantial ways in their focus projects (see below).

Opportunities to learn in this course will derive from three major activities: (a) class interactions [synchronous and asynchronous]; (b) weekly readings/viewings; and (c) written projects. Learning from the course relies on active, high-quality engagement with all three activities.

Class Sessions / Participation
Because this is an online course, face-to-face class sessions will be replaced by three types of course participation: (1) independent study, (2) synchronous interactions, and (3) asynchronous interactions. Independent study will include reading texts and completing course projects. Synchronous interactions will involve realtime small-group discussions. Asynchronous interactions will involve whole group virtual learning activities that can be pursued independently and across time. Each module will at times include all three types of participation or at least two types of participation. Please note: although this is an online course, the course readings, projects, and activities are designed with the typical expectations and demands of a traditional 3-credit MSU course in mind. Please keep that in mind as you go through the readings, complete the assignments per module, and prepare your final projects and papers.

Regardless of the type of participation, four activities will be emphasized throughout the semester: (a) developing images of effective reading instruction; (b) identifying strengths and weaknesses in one's own teaching of reading; (c) communicating with colleagues about the teaching of reading; and (d) establishing an infrastructure for lifelong learning about the teaching of reading. [Note: For any course members enrolled in the MATC program, these activities correspond to the program's goals. Specifically, activities (a) and (b) target the program's "engaging in critical inquiry" goal. Activities (a) and (c) support the program's "developing as accomplished teachers" goal. Finally, activities (c) and (d) address the program's "becoming teacher leaders" goal.]

Being successful in online courses requires substantial initiative and volition. You need to *keep up* with assigned work, *actively engage* in class activities (e.g., discussion boards, viewing videos), *monitor your learning*, and *communicate* with your colleagues or the instructor when you have questions, comments, or concerns.

Structure of our Work Together: ANGEL
MSU's course system, ANGEL, will serve as the primary site for our work. All course documents, texts, and dropboxes can be found on ANGEL, and the ANGEL communications system (announcements, e-mails, chats) will serve as our primary communication network. Although some course activities may take place outside of this course system (e.g., reading an online article, viewing a video), our course site will be the central and primary hub for our work together. In part this means:
   · All work will be submitted to ANGEL dropboxes throughout the course.
   · The modules for each week can be found on ANGEL on the main Learning Modules tab in ANGEL. Each module will "open" at 12:01 a.m. on a Monday morning. (Although the

modules we have already completed will remain available to you throughout the duration of the course, they will technically "close" at 11:50 p.m. on a Sunday evening.)

As this suggests, considerable use of various technologies will be required, including (but not limited to): ANGEL (downloads, drop boxes, email, surveys, Live Chat, discussion forums) through a browser compatible with it (e.g., Firefox 3.5.2), downloading and playing videos [including those streamed from various sites], and accessing material digitally through the MSU Library System. In order to engage in these course activities, you must have access to a **reliable broadband connection** in order to engage in a number of the course activities. I STRONGLY recommend that you give yourself plenty of time to learn to use these technologies before projects or experiences using them are due. [For example, if it is your first time viewing a video from learner.org, do not wait until the night before the project is due to try doing so. If you do, and you encounter technical problems, it is much less likely that you will be able to get those problems resolved before the project is due.] With rare exceptions, technical problems will not be considered a valid excuse for not completing an project.

Most importantly, it is your responsibility to seek and obtain the technical support that you need to use technologies required in the course (see below for more information). I have encountered many technical problems as I have worked to set up this course, and I have no doubt I will encounter others. I am very sympathetic about any challenges you may encounter in using technologies for this course and getting the help you need to address them. I have done my best to simplify and streamline the technological demands of this course; it's also important to do whatever you possibly can to ensure that technical problems do not get in the way of your full engagement in the course.

Readings
Readings for the course come from professional organizations related to the teaching of reading, professional books related to the teaching of reading, and journals related to the teaching of reading. Each individual set of readings will inform the course activities related to the module for which they are listed. Most of these texts are available for free via the Internet or the Michigan State Library. For those readings available through the MSU Library, you will need to go directly to the MSU website, and access the articles through the website.

Great care has been taken to create a manageable reading load, using number of pages and text difficulty as the primary indices. Texts include both practitioner-oriented and educational research articles.

Readings that will provide a thorough foundation in the advanced elementary reading methods have been selected for inclusion in this course. There are two book that are required for the course:

> Harvey, S., & Daniels, H. (2009). *Comprehension and collaboration: Inquiry circles in action.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
>
> McKenna, M. C., & Stahl, K. A. (2009). *Assessment for reading instruction*, second edition. New York: Guilford Press.

If you are teaching reading in English and you do not know terms such as *digraph*, *blend*, *dipthong*, and *schwa*, I strongly recommend that you go through a text such as:

> Fox, B. J. (2009). *Phonics and structural analysis for the teacher of reading: Programmed for self-instruction* (10th ed.). New York: Prentice Hall.
>
> or
>
> Dow, R. S., & Baer, G. T. (2006). *Self-paced phonics: A text for educators* (4th ed.). New York: Prentice Hall.

Course Projects
In addition to reading course texts, course members will be asked to complete three major projects. The project guidelines (available on ANGEL, in the Course Documents folder) provide further information about each project. A brief synopsis has also been included below.

1: Teacher Learning Community Membership (50 points)
This ongoing course project consists of two sets of activities. It is designed to address all four course emphases (a-d) and to allow course members to collaborate in processing course content. The two parts of this project include:

> *(i)Inquiry Circles* – In this part of the project, course members will participate in a series of asynchronous interactions by logging onto ANGEL, finding the Inquiry Circles folder associated with each module, and completing the Inquiry Circle Action Plan. In these inquiry circles, course members will work together to establish our learning community, interrogate the assumptions underlying instructional approaches labeled "best practices," explore the components of reading, map the domain of reading instruction, and complete similar activities.
>
> *(ii) Talkin' Shop* - In this part of the project, course members will spend time together (typically 30 minutes per module) discussing their connections, questions, reactions, and thoughts related to course readings and relevant previous/current experiences. These synchronous interactions may occur through telephone conference calls, Skype video/audio calls, or ANGEL chat rooms. After each discussion, one member per small group will take responsibility for writing a memo that summarizes the group's main points and questions and posting this in the designated dropbox on ANGEL.

2: Focus Project (30 points)
The purpose of this assignment is to encourage self-directed study in a specific area or aspect of the teaching of reading. Examples of focus projects include writing a review of literature in a particular area; designing a new unit in which you will teach reading; a case study of an individual learner in your class; redesign of some part of your curriculum or school day; creation of a meaningful professional development experience for others; a comparison of recommended practices for the teaching of reading in two different contexts (e.g., China and the U.S.); and so on. You are asked to submit a description of your focus project earlier on in the semester so that

we can agree on your particular project and its focus. Focus projects are intended to help you develop (further) expertise in the teaching of reading at the elementary school level and to foster the translation of that expertise into tangible improvements in your teaching of reading.

3: My Teaching Beliefs & Practices Paper (20 points)
This course project targets course emphases (a), (b), and (d). Participation will primarily involve independent study (with course members and the instructor serving as resources and supports as needed). The project has three parts. First, each course member will reflect on his or her own reading instructional practices and beliefs at the beginning of the course. Second, each course member will identify aspects of his or her own teaching of reading that have been affirmed by course-related experiences and aspects of his or her teaching of reading that have been drawn into question through course-related experiences. Third, each course member will discuss his or her plans for continuing to learn about and practice effective reading instruction.

For each project, guidelines and more detailed information are posted on ANGEL. These project sheets provide rationales, describe instructor expectations, articulate project requirements (including formatting guidelines), and include specific grading criteria. The deadlines for each part of each project are also listed below.

For any questions about course projects, please follow the procedure listed under "Technical or Course Assistance" in Appendix A.

NOTE: Membership in any teacher learning community comes with rights and responsibilities, and the viability and usefulness of teacher learning communities are directly dependent on individual members' choices and conduct. Consequently, course members' professionalism and participation are extremely important and (although not a formal "Course Project") will factor into the final grades (see "Course Policies" for more information)

COURSE POLICIES

Evaluation
Evaluation in this course will be based on performance in the three major activities listed above: virtual/long-distance interactions, readings, and written work. Specifically, grades will be calculated on a 100-point scale.

Please note: Professionalism, which includes such things as meeting course deadlines and using appropriate language, will be evaluated on an ongoing basis throughout the course. For each project, points will be assigned to reflect the degree to which course members have followed the norms that guide teachers in their day-to-day conduct.

All grades will be posted on ANGEL. It is your responsibility to check your grades regularly and bring questions and errors to me. If you have questions or concerns about a particular grade, I encourage you to discuss them with me at your earliest convenience. I would be happy to meet and provide any necessary clarifications or adjustments. Unless I hear from you (throughout the semester or during the final grade-checking opportunity), I will assume that the posted grades

match your records and that you fully understand the grading procedures, criteria, and evaluations.

As described below, it is expected that course members will turn in original work that has been developed explicitly for the purpose of fulfilling TE842 course requirements. Submissions to dropboxes on ANGEL constitute your acknowledgement that the guidelines for Academic Honesty have been followed and that the work was originally created for this course.

I follow University policy regarding incomplete grades: When special or unusual circumstances occur, the Instructor may postpone assignment of the student's final grade in a course by use of an I-Incomplete. The I-Incomplete may be given in the following circumstances: The student (a) has completed at least 12 weeks of the semester (in this case, five weeks), but is unable to complete the class work and/or take the final examination because of illness or other compelling reasons; (b) has completed satisfactory work in the course; and (c) in the Instructor's judgment can complete the required work without repeating the course.

Finally, all projects turned in before the posted deadlines will be graded, and feedback will be provided in the form of course grades, criteria-related judgments (e.g., completed rubrics), and (occasionally) written comments. As the instructor, I reserve the right to deduct a percentage (up to 10% per day) of the project grade for work submitted after the posted deadline, unless alternate arrangements have been made *in advance of the due date*.

Academic Honesty
This course adheres to Michigan State University's policy of scholastic integrity. Specifically: Article 2.3.3 of the Academic Freedom Report states, "the student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." More specifically, the College of Education (COE) adheres to the policies on academic honesty as specified in General Student Regulations, 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades, and in the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades, which are included in Spartan Life: Student Handbook and Resource Guide. In cases where course members commit an act of academic dishonesty, the COE-mandated procedures and policies will be followed (which may potentially include consequences such as receiving a 0.0 on the project or in the course). For additional information, please see MSU's ombudsmen website links:
https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/RegsOrdsPolicies.html,
http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/plagiarism.html, and
http://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/dishonestystud.html.

All members are expected to turn in original works and, where using others' ideas and words, to provide complete references and quotations (as appropriate). In this course, we will use the American Psychological Association's (APA) format for all references and quotations. More information is available in the 5th or 6th edition of APA's style manual (whichever one you prefer, but please be consistent with the use of one or the other). I ask that you complete your work in APA style for three reasons. First, the consistent use of one style (including citations, references, headings, and the like) aids communication; the reader of your work (whether it's another course member or myself) brings specific expectations, and conforming to those expectations allows them to activate and apply their schemas as they work to process the

meaning in your text. Second, one of the hallmarks of a professional is his or her conformance to the discourse patterns of his or her profession; by adhering to the APA style, it supports your claim that you are a professional educator. (While this may not be as critical to success in a single MSU course, it's extremely critical in the field; habituating yourself to the accepted style throughout your program makes life after MSU easier.) Third, conforming to the expectations of APA style is a sign of respect for others' ideas and work; this is a crucial part of maintaining scholastic integrity – which is the responsibility of every one of us at MSU. Style manuals are available for purchase or in many libraries. Also, online guides that may be helpful include: *http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/APA_style,* and http://webster.commnet.edu/apa/apa_index.htm.

Course members are reminded not to use any text verbatim on any course projects without quotation marks and source citations. *Warning: do not go to a site like Wikipedia (generally not a reliable or effective source anyway), copy and paste, and then "rearrange" words or sentences or replace a few words here and there – that constitutes plagiarism. If you are quoting verbatim, always use quotation marks and cite the page number (or, for non-paginated texts, the section and paragraph number).*

Resources
A variety of resources exist to help you be successful in this course. In addition to your colleagues and the instructor, the Community Lounge on ANGEL includes several Q&A forums, and I will post useful information and valuable resources to this site (as I come across or create them) throughout the semester. Moreover, several agencies on campus are available to provide support. For more information, please see http://grad.msu.edu/resources, http://www.spartanpartners.msu.edu/student, and/or http://rcpd.msu.edu. For issues, questions, or assistance with ANGEL, please click on the ? tab on the ANGEL homepage (https://angel.msu.edu/default.asp) or contact 1-800-500-1554.

Accommodations for Disabilities – We would like to accommodate students with disabilities; please contact me with any concerns. Students with disabilities should also contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 or 355-1293(TTY).

Please see Appendices A and B for helpful hints and tips about being successful in this course.

Conflict Resolution
This course includes a significant amount of interpersonal interaction. While we always hope things will go smoothly, occasional conflicts may arise. Please come directly to me first.

Confidentiality
This course involves extensive discussion of your teaching. When doing so, whether digitally or face-to-face, please use pseudonyms for all colleagues, students, and members of students' families.

This course may also involves photographing or videotaping aspects of instruction (e.g., your classroom environment, teaching activities). If these photographs or videos are posted on the

ANGEL site, they will be accessible only to course members and the small number of faculty and staff who assist with the course. However, if you choose to post these photographs or videos on sites such as TeacherTube, they will be much more widely available. In either case, please follow any applicable school or district policies. If there is a student in your class who cannot be videotaped, even for these purposes, please arrange videotaping so that child is not identifiable in the video.

Individual Needs

As you will (I hope) see, I take your learning in this course very seriously. I believe it is a tremendous responsibility, and also a pleasure, to work with teachers of reading. If at any point in the course there is something further I could do to enhance your learning in this course, please bring it to my attention.

Appendix A
Being Successful in TE842

Writing in Digital Environments

The ANGEL course management system will house our content and interactions. In addition, email will be our primary means of communication, so please read your e-mail frequently. (If you have not activated your @msu.edu account, please do so by January 9, 2012. **If you use an email account other than your MSU account, please have your MSU account forward your messages to your alternate account, since I will use your MSU address through ANGEL for all class correspondence.**

To ensure the highest-quality written work, it would be a good idea to thoroughly review the Project Guidelines. **Unless stated otherwise in these guidelines, all work should be written in a Microsoft Word document, according to the following stylistic parameters: Times New Roman, double-spaced, font size 12, with 1-inch margins on all sides.**

Technical Assistance

Because our course is housed in ANGEL, we may all find ourselves needing some sort of assistance with one or more technological or course issues over the course of our time together. To obtain assistance, please use the following procedure:

(0) If you have a course-related question, skip the steps below and go straight to Course Assistance section. If it is a technical question, please start at Step 1 below.

(1) *Consult the ANGEL helpdesk* [see "ANGEL Help" online for more information] *and/or the MSU College of Education Technical Interns in Education (TIES).* – These experts are a great source for basic access and organizational questions.
  · The ANGEL helpdesk is run by the MSU Libraries Distance Learning Services at **http://www2.lib.msu.edu/about/dls/division-dls.jsp**. Their toll-free number is 1-800-500-1554 or 1-517-355-2345. They can also be reached via e-mail at **reachout@msu.edu**.

· The MSU College of Education TIES are located in 133 Erickson Hall. Their website, which contains many valuable resources, is http://ctt.educ.msu.edu/?page_id=6. They can be reached by phone [517-355-TIES (8437)] or e-mail (ties@msu.edu).

NOTE: For non-ANGEL and non-MSU technological issues, it might be appropriate to contact the helplines for individual websites, particular software, or for your particular computer. Please use these resources as appropriate before going to Step #2.

(2) *For problems that affect every member of the community or emergencies, e-mail or call me –* I recognize that ANGEL or our use of this system may sometimes present glitches or confusion. If neither of the previous options resolves the issue, in cases of emergency, or for widespread issues that remain unresolved, please let me know. I'll figure out how to help or to fix the problem.

Course Assistance
Also, we may sometimes have questions about the course or about the content. The most efficient way to learn the answers to your questions and to help your voice to be heard is to use the following approach:

(1) Consult the course documents (syllabus, project guidelines, etc.).

(2) Ask at least two other course members.

(3) Check the "General TE842 Questions" Discussion Threads to see whether someone else has asked your question or voiced your comments.

(4) If these three activities do not answer your question or address your comments, please post it on either the "General TE842 Questions" Discussion Threads. NOTE: For non-urgent questions which involve confidential topics (e.g., concern about grades, issue with students during lesson), please e-mail me using the ANGEL course system.]

(5) For more urgent questions, please call me directly, using the phone number listed at the top. If I miss your call (usually due to other meetings or teaching responsibilities), I will listen to your voicemail and call you back as soon as possible. *[As a friendly reminder, it's usually a good idea to ask questions about the projects well before the posted deadlines, because unexpected communication snafus or brief windows of opportunity to respond may preclude satisfactory answers to last-minute questions.]*

Communication Expectations
Building our professional practice is a highly-personal and intense endeavor. At times, learning and growing can be uncertain and stressful, and we may not always agree with each other's thinking. To promote productivity and harmony, please respect the following guidelines:

(1) ***Use professional language and tones in all written and verbal communications****.* As joint members of this teacher learning community, how and what we say will affect other members' feelings and thoughts. While we are not

meeting in a Pre-K through 12 school building, the accepted conventions of expression that guide teachers in their daily conduct still apply during our course-related interactions.

(2) *Follow the American Psychological Association's (APA, 5th or 6th Edition) style of writing.* This style includes expectations about how to credit others for their ideas and how to communicate what we know in convincing ways. Please see earlier note about the rationale for this guideline and resources that you may find useful.

(3) *Respect the written deadlines and project information.* In the course syllabus, the assignment sheets, and/or on ANGEL, I have included information about both the due dates of different parts of the project, our tentative progress through individual Learning Modules, and evaluation guidelines (e.g., rubrics, feedback procedures). Please seek out and follow this information. NOTE: As an instructor, I recognize that, due to unforeseeable events in our lives, a need to turn in late work may sometimes arise; this should be discussed with me in advance of the due date. Late assignments will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor and may incur a grade penalty (10% reduction in grade).

(4) *Reach out to your instructor*. As one of your mentors in your ongoing quest to develop as teachers, I have agreed to teach this course because we care about each of you and your learning. If you find that an interpersonal conflict has arisen or if you encounter a problem that wasn't resolved after multiple problem-solving attempts (such as those listed above), please contact me immediately. I will do my best to help. If you believe an error was made in assigning/calculating your grade, please (1) contact me for clarification (to clarify the rationale for your grade or the feedback you were provided) and/or (2) submit the graded assignment, along with a written request to review the assignment and a description of the specific points of clarification/disagreement that you also have marked in the assignment, to me for re-grading. *NOTE: Please keep in mind that I will at all times be grading with my eye on the performance-related course objectives (because I have no way of gauging your purported effort). Re-grading does not guarantee a change in your grade and (if I initially missed deductions that should have been taken) may sometimes result in a lower grade.*

(5) *Be your own advocate.*
- · For any course members with special needs, phone me by January 19th to explore alternative arrangements for completing assignments.
- · Contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (517-353-9642 or TTY 517-355-1293) for additional assistance.
- · Use the Writing Center (http://writing.msu.edu/) and MSU Library Resources (http://www2.lib.msu.edu/graduate/index.jsp) for help with writing and learning.
- · Use MSU's Counseling Center (517-365-8270) as needed for help with non-academic issues that may have implications for your learning in this course.

· Use your peers for additional help with writing and learning.