Closing the Achievement Gap I:
Comprehensive Literacy in a Developmentally and Culturally Responsive Environment

Offered by the Institute for Educational Renewal
in cooperation with John Carroll University

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Euclid School District

Course Description: This course is a key component of the partnership between Euclid Schools and the Institute for Educational Renewal. School Change I will use the State Standards as the basis for collaborative work in curriculum design and implementation. The district-level course focuses on a standards-based comprehensive literacy framework and its compatibility with the use of multilevel, culturally responsive teaching strategies that lead to closing the achievement gap. Teachers will work together to develop and implement units of study, individual lesson plans, and effective assessments that will lead toward attaining the standards for their grade level. In addition, teachers will consider ways in which they can serve as catalysts for effective change in classroom practice throughout the school.

Required Text: *Yardsticks,* by ChipWood
Assigned readings and/or texts from references (Conrad, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994, Ch. 3; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Taylor, 2003; Williams, 2003, Ch. 3)

Rationale: At the heart of effective teaching and learning are research-based strategies for developing literacy. The comprehensive literacy framework combines systematic, explicit instruction on skills and strategies with authentic, meaningful activities that will engage students in their learning. It recognizes the growing consensus that children learn most effectively from comprehensive literacy instruction based on their developmental needs (Joint Position Statement of the International Reading Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1998; Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1998). The comprehensive literacy framework also reflects all the components of literacy instruction that are necessary for children to reach the high standards that have been mandated at state and local levels. In addition, this framework is compatible with effective, culturally responsive teaching strategies. These strategies provide a basis for instruction that address standards while connecting content to children's own experiences (Gay, 2000; Hillard, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Desired Outcomes:

    Knowledge: The teacher/learner will acquire knowledge of:
1. current theory in child development, comprehensive literacy instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and standards-based curriculum.
2. standards-driven curriculum design strategies.
3. a variety of assessment strategies.
4. teaching strategies that support a comprehensive approach to literacy instruction.
5. factors that contribute to meaningful change in schools.

    Performances: The teacher/learner will:
1. work collaboratively to develop culturally responsive and age/grade appropriate lesson plans, and assessments that are based on the Ohio Standards.
2. implement standards-based curriculum, using effective learning strategies that support a comprehensive, integrated approach to literacy instruction.
3. implement effective assessment strategies and use the results to determine implications for future teaching and learning.
4. create a classroom environment that is based on respect and cooperation, and that supports children's efforts to attain Ohio standards.

    Attitudes: The teacher/learner will:
1. develop high expectations for all children and renewed respect for the child's role in creating his/her own learning.
2. recognize his/her ability to effect meaningful change in the classroom and in the school.
3. recognize his/her ability to design and implement developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive standards-based curriculum.
4. appreciate the value of ongoing professional development that emphasizes openness to new ideas and collaboration with colleagues.

Course Outline: This two credit course will consist of 20 classroom hours and 4-6 hours of one-on-one coaching. The course will address selected topics including the following:
    Session 1: Introduction to Comprehensive Literacy
    Session 2: Developmentally and Culturally Responsive Teaching
    Session 3: Writing Workshop Focusing on Independent Writing
    Session 4: Reading Workshop Focusing on Independent Reading
    Session 5: Word Study within a Literacy Framework
    Session 6: Tying it all Together for Student Success

Models of Instruction: Each session will allow teachers to focus on the three contributing factors they need to consider when designing their curriculum. These factors include implementing standards-based planning and teaching, getting to know their students as individuals and learners, and reflecting on their own personal practice. The modes of instruction will include observation, personal reflection, discussion, cooperative learning, classroom implementation activities, demonstration, lecture, and portfolio sharing.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:
Requirements:
- Attend class/seminar and participate in class/seminar activities and discussion.
- Observe teachers within and across IER schools.
- Work with consultants to implement course content into actual classroom practice.
- Write reflections on assigned readings and assigned classroom activities.
- Develop a standards-based portfolio of lesson plans, student work, classroom materials, etc. for ongoing use in the classroom.

Requirement for students registered for transfer 500 level graduate credit:
- Read and analyze at least three articles on a subject under study in class and prepare a written report.
- Presentation of findings to class

Evaluation: Each student will do a self-evaluation of his/her own professional development. The instructors will respond to assignments with written comments.

Final Grade if taken for workshop 400 level credit:
- Pass – Work demonstrates consistent commitment to course content and classroom implementation activities
- Fail – Work does not demonstrate commitment to course nor knowledge of course content

Final Grade if taken for graduate 500 level credit:
- A – Work demonstrates consistent commitment to course content and classroom implementation activities
- B – Work demonstrates knowledge of course content
- C – Work demonstrates minimal engagement with course content

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