

# PBS TeacherLine Course Syllabus

## Title

RDLA 210 - Effective Writing Instruction (Grades 1-3)

## Target Audience

This course is intended for pre-service and in-service teachers, grades 1-3, to address methods they can use to actively engage students in writing. The techniques included in this course are effective tools that educators can use to support students' development as writers. The focus of this course is to provide learners with the time to engage with the theoretical and practical information about effective writing instruction and to use the strategies to foster a classroom environment that offers multiple writing opportunities.

## Prerequisites

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

- Have access to a writing classroom or a few students in grades 1-3 to implement the strategies, lesson plans, and case study.
- Be familiar with taking an online course or have gone through the PBS TeacherLine Practice Learning Online course.
- Have some experience in grades 1-3 classrooms.
- Have an interest in language, literacy, and writing instruction.

## Course Description

This course explores the theory and practice of effective writing instruction for students in first through third grades. From establishing a good learning environment to showing students' work to their families, learners will discover ways to integrate new ideas for maintaining or improving Writing Workshop in their own instruction. They will view videos of student writing conferences and reflect on the use of technological aids for editing at the first-, second-, and third-grade levels. They will survey the obstacles to good student writing and share insights with colleagues; consider how best to help students evaluate source credibility; and learn how Writing Workshop offers advantages across the curriculum. This course also offers sample minilessons that learners may tailor to the needs of their student population. As a final project, this course offers a chance either to write a synthesis paper or to design a class Web site to accompany a Writing Workshop program.

## Instructor/Facilitator

See instructor/facilitator sheet.

## Credits

To be determined by college or university.

## Goals

By the end of the course, learners will have an understanding of the following and the ability to apply this knowledge in their own classrooms:

- Methods of assessing students' writing and ways to use assessment to inform instruction.
- Strategies for setting up and maintaining a Writing Workshop.
- Techniques for embedding specific skills instruction in the Writing Workshop.
- Strategies for helping students write and comprehend informational text.
- Ways to support diverse students in the Writing Workshop.

## Course Objectives

Students completing Effective Writing Instruction, Grades 1-3 will be able to:

- Develop a rubric that can be used to evaluate a report or non-fiction assignment and describe how the rubric criteria align to the NCTE/IRA, state, and NCEE standards.
- Evaluate classroom environments for how well they can support Writing Workshop.



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- Evaluate a minilesson plan and discuss their own plans to use minilessons in the classroom.
- Use a three-column method to help students choose writing topics.
- Observe struggling writers, work with them to set goals for writing growth, and plan how to use technology to support their goals.

### Relationship of Course to Program Goals and Professional Organizations

Local stations can complete this section.

### **Outline of Content and Assignments**

After previewing the documents in the Course Information, learners will proceed to the Course Content to complete the following six sessions, working through each session in order. Essential information pertaining to the topic is presented within each session. Throughout the sessions, learners are also asked to articulate their ideas in various forms; for example, 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 with strategies both prior to and following the completion of the weekly assignments. As a final project, the learner will either write a paper that synthesizes their learning and plans future instruction or design a class Web site to accompany a Writing Workshop program.

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 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12. In Session 1 of this course, learners will read the applicable NCTE/IRA standards and a portion of the *New Standards* written by the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE). Learners will also familiarize themselves with how their own states' standards address writing.

Additionally, this course addresses several of the [ISTE NETS\\*T](#) for teachers including the following:

- Demonstrate introductory knowledge, skills, and understanding of concepts related to technology.
- Design developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that apply technology-enhanced instructional strategies to support the diverse needs of learners.
- Identify and locate technology resources and evaluate them for accuracy and suitability.
- Use technology to support learner-centered strategies that address the diverse needs of students.
- Apply technology to increase productivity and communicate and collaborate with peers, parents, and the larger community.

### Session 1: Using Standards and Assessment to Guide Writing Instruction

#### **Objectives**

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

- Define professional goals and expectations for this course in the online journal.
- Explain prior knowledge and experiences about teaching writing to students in the online journal.
- Identify and discuss the many purposes portfolios can serve.
- Design a rubric that uses standards to assess a writing assignment.

Read

- NCTE/IRA Standards  
<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/standards/110846.htm>
- Grades 1-3 standards related to writing from the learner's own state
- Grades 1, 2, and 3 Writing Standards



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From National Center on Education and the Economy's *New Standards, Speaking and Listening Committee*

- "Student Friendly Scoring Guides" from the book, *6+1 Traits of Writing*

### Additional Resources (not required)

- PBS Talking and Reading from <http://www.pbs.org/parents/issuesadvice/talkingandreading/>
- ISTE National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS\*S) [http://cnets.iste.org/students/s\\_stands.html](http://cnets.iste.org/students/s_stands.html)
- Rubistar from <http://rubistar.4teachers.org>
- Assessing Young Children: Measuring Growth and Celebrating Achievements <http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/prek2/issues/1201issue.shtm>
- Tompkins, G. E. (2004). *Teaching writing: Balancing process and product*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall.

### Write in Online Journal

- Reflect on expectations for the course.
- Reflect on prior experiences teaching writing to students and any techniques that were used.

### Participate in an Online Discussion

- Introduce themselves to other learners.
- Identify the instructional purposes that each portfolio tour in the video seems to serve. Respond to: "How does what you saw in the video relate to how you use portfolios in your own classroom and what do you feel are the crucial elements of a successful portfolio tour?"

### Complete Activities and Assignments

- View the video vignettes, "Rishij's Portfolio" and "Olivia's Portfolio."
- Complete the "Rubric-Based Assessment" assignment.

## Session 2: Creating and Sustaining Writing Workshop

### Objectives

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

- Debate the efficacy of the Writing Workshop model for students in first grade.
- Evaluate a classroom environment for Writing Workshop.
- Describe how to integrate systems or ideas for maintaining or improving Writing Workshop within own writing instruction.

### Read

- "Is Process Writing the 'Write Stuff'?" from *Educational Leadership*
- "Work, Space, and Time" from the book, *About the Authors*
- "The Nature of Workshop Curriculum" from the book, *The Writing Workshop: Working Though the Hard Parts (And They're All Hard Parts)*

### Additional Resources (not required)

- Calkins, L. M. (2003). Planning Curriculum in a Primary Writing Workshop. In *The Nuts & bolts of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. pp. 19-27, 29-41.
- Ray, K. W. with Laminack, L. (2001). The Writing workshop teacher's plan book. In *The Writing workshop: Working through the hard parts (and they're all hard parts)*. Urbana: NCTE. pp. 187-209.



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### Write in Online Journal

- Reflect on the systems and ideas presented in this session that were new and which ones will be easiest to implement in writing instruction. Choose one of the more difficult ideas or systems and explain why it is worth working on and well as how to begin using it in practice.

### Participate in an Online Discussion

- Respond to: “Some teachers feel that first graders do not yet know enough about writing to engage effectively in a Writing Workshop model. Citing evidence from the videos, take a stance on this issue.”

### Complete Activities and Assignments

- View the video vignettes, “When You Finish” and “Support for Independent Writing” to see a first-grade teacher’s Writing Workshop.
- Complete the “Assessing a Writing Workshop Environment” assignment.

## Session 3: Teaching Skills in Writing Workshop

### Objectives

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

- Discuss and exchange ideas on how to help students develop conventional spelling in the context of the Writing Workshop.
- Evaluate excerpts from a videoconference for their effectiveness in teaching skills.
- Reflect on the appropriateness of technological aids for editing.
- Critique a minilesson related to choice of specific skills instruction, use of language, writing for an audience, figurative language, or conventions and possessives.
- Explain how to modify the minilesson to meet the needs of own students.

### Read

- “Conference Fundamentals” from the book, *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*
- “Minilessons” from the book, *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*

### Additional Resources (not required)

- More Than Words: Learning to Write in the Digital Age  
<http://www.cast.org/udl/index.cfm?i=567>
- “Electronic Editing: Taking Advantage of Built-In Tools to Improve Students’ Writing From the magazine, *Learning and Leading with Technology*
- Calkins, L. & Louis, N. (2003). *Writing for readers: Teaching skills and strategies*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. pp. 27-34, 57-64.
- Calkins, L. M. (2003). Teaching methods: Minilessons that power your curriculum. In *The Nuts & bolts of teaching writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. pp. 45-60.
- Fountas, I. C. & Pinell, G. S. (2001). *Guiding Readers and Writers* (p. 70). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

### Write in Online Journal

- Reflect on the student conferences shown in the video vignettes and identify what higher-level writing skills might have been useful to address in the conferences and what might have been some other ways to address the editing issues. In particular, share thoughts about having third-graders use word-processing software to help them identify simple editing problems.

### Participate in an Online Discussion



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- Respond to: “Share your experience using the “Word Wall” interactive with students and exchange ideas about ways to use Word Walls, whether electronic or paper-based, in your own classroom. Try to imagine any obstacles in using them effectively, and consider what strategies you might use to overcome those problems. If you have used Word Walls before, feel free to draw on your prior experience.”

### Complete Activities and Assignments

- Explore the “Word Wall” interactive with two students.
- View the video vignette, “Julia’s Conference,” to see an example of a third-grade student conference.
- View the video vignette, “Maddie’s Conference,” to see an example of a first-grade student conference.
- Complete the “Minilesson Review” assignment.

### Session 4: Genres and Topics

#### Objectives

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

- Compose an informational essay about a topic of interest using the techniques described in the article “Writing: Teaching Children to Compose Informational Text.”
- Discuss how to use Writing Workshop to inform instruction in other curriculum areas and vice versa.
- Discuss how to help students evaluate the quality of sources.
- Chart students’ interests and analyze the implications for own writing instruction.
- Describe experience using a technology approach to help students compose informational text and explain how to plan to use this experience in future instruction.

#### Read

- “Writing: Teaching Children to Compose Informational Text” from the book, *Reading and Writing Informational Text in the Primary Grades*
- “Helping Children Choose Topics” from the book, *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*

#### Additional Resources (not required)

- Kathy Schrock’s Critical Evaluation Information Resources  
<http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/eval.html>
- Buss, K. & Karnowski, L. (2000) *Reading and Writing Literary Genres*. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.
- The Democracy Project  
<http://pbskids.org/democracy/educators/presdiary.html>
- A Recipe for Motivating Creative Writers  
<http://www.pbs.org/teachersource/prek2/issues/1003issue.shtm>
- Bintz, William P. & Dillard, J. (2004). “Seeing writing instruction differently: Lessons with lasting impressions.” *Language Arts* (82) 2, 110-118.

#### Write in Online Journal

- Reflect on the experience of using the “Ideaboard” interactive with two students, noting the similarities and differences of how they used the tool. Share how this tool could be used in classroom instruction.

#### Participate in an Online Discussion

- Group 1, respond to: “How can Writing Workshop inform your instruction in other curriculum areas or vice versa?”
- Group 2, respond to: “How can you teach students to evaluate the quality of the sources they encounter, particularly Web sites?”



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## Complete Activities and Assignments

- Complete the “Writing Non-Fiction” assignment.
- Complete the “Charting Student Interests” assignment.
- Explore the “Ideaboard” interactive with two students.

## Session 5: Assessment and Differentiation

### Objectives

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

- Discuss whether implementing Writing Workshop allows one to adequately differentiate instruction.
- Evaluate strategies for teaching writing to English Language Learners.
- Prepare a report that recognizes and addresses the difficulties of a reluctant writer.

### Read

- “Assessment” from the book, *About the Authors: Writing Workshop with Our Youngest Writers*
- “Progress Forms” from the book, *Writing Workshop: The Essential Guide*
- “Worlds Beneath the Words: Writing Workshop with Second Language Learners” From the magazine, *Language Arts*
- “The Write Motivation: Using the Internet to Engage Students in Writing Across the Curriculum” from the magazine, *Learning and Leading with Technology*
- “Scaffolding for Students: Reading and Writing with Blogs” from the magazine, *Learning and Leading with Technology*

### Additional Resources (not required)

- Companion Web Site for Reading, Writing and Learning in ESL  
[http://wps.ablongman.com/ab\\_peregoy\\_esl\\_4](http://wps.ablongman.com/ab_peregoy_esl_4)
- Postcards from Buster  
<http://pbskids.org/buster/parents/lessons.html>

### Write in Online Journal

- Reflect on how the course has presented the teaching of writing to English Language Learners, noting which ideas were new, which ideas to agree or disagree with, and what has been learned that will get implemented in own classroom.

### Participate in an Online Discussion

- Discuss whether or not Writing Workshop allows teachers to differentiate writing instruction adequately for students, and why or why not.

### Complete Activity and Assignment

- Complete the “Struggling Writer” assignment.

## Session 6: Synthesis and Enhanced Practice

### Objectives

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

- Discuss challenges of using computers for writing instruction and exchange ideas for solving those challenges.
- Compose a synthesis paper summarizing the ideas in this course and plans for adopting new practices. (Final Project Option 1)
- Plan a class Web site to enhance Writing Workshop. (Final Project Option 2)



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- Assess learning in this course by comparing prior knowledge and acquired knowledge in a journal activity.
- Analyze the learning experience in this course by reflecting about professional goals and expectations in the online journal.
- Analyze the learning experience in this course by reflecting on professional goals and expectations in the online journal.

### Participate in an Online Discussion

- Respond to: “What are some challenges you have faced and solutions you have found to helping students write with computers? Brainstorm solutions to the challenges your co-learners describe.”

### Final Project

Learners will submit their choice of two final projects in Session 6. The two options are:

#### Option 1: Synthesis Paper

1. Paper that synthesizes what has been learned about writing instruction for first through third grades, aligns to the standards, and details plans for future instruction.
2. Peer review

#### Option 2: Writing Workshop Web Site

1. Web site plan for Writing Workshop that provides an area for students and teachers.
2. Reflection that provides rationale for Web site plan and aligns the project to the standards.
3. Peer review

### Schedule

This course is scheduled to take approximately 30 hours to complete readings, activities, video, assignments, reflections, and a final project.

### Requirements

Learners are expected to:

- Complete all assignments.
- Participate regularly in Discussion Boards.
- Submit the final assignment in a timely fashion (determined by the facilitator).



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## Materials

Technical Requirements

- Word processor
- Internet service provider
- E-mail
- TeacherLine required plug-ins

## Academic Dishonesty Policy

To be inserted by institution

## Evaluation

This course can be taken for graduate credit on a pass/fail basis, or for a letter grade and graduate credit. See graduate credit details pertaining to specific graduate credit institutions.

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