

Foundations of Literacy Course

Course Description

This course meets the Science of Reading professional development requirement set forth in SB 460 (2025). It is designed to strengthen educators' knowledge and practice of effective methods for teaching and assessing foundational literacy skills aligned with the science of reading. Over ten weeks, participants will explore phonological and phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, leaving with evidence-based strategies to accelerate reading growth and promote success for all students through both Tier 1 instruction and targeted interventions. In addition, the course emphasizes classroom management and trauma-informed practices that foster safe, supportive environments for literacy learning.

Audience

- General and Special Education Elementary teachers
- Read by Grade 3 Program Leads
- Read by Grade 3 Site-based Literacy Strategists
- Elementary Interventionists
- Elementary School Administrators
- Supervisors of Elementary School Administrators
- Literacy Leaders

Learning Experiences

Educators will deepen their practice through:

- Reading of the course text and selected scholarly articles
- Viewing curated videos and demonstrations
- Engaging in structured discussions and collaborative activities
- Applying strategies in classroom-based practice and reflection

Assessment

Participants will demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessments, including:

- Reflective assignments using the 3s framework adapted from Harvard Graduate School of Education. (n.d.). The 4 Cs. Project Zero.
- Application activities during Zoom sessions that connect course concepts to classroom practice
- Content quizzes
- Culminating Reflective Assignment
 - In this culminating reflection, participants will analyze key connections between course texts and their professional practice, highlighting moments of personal or pedagogical resonance. They will identify core concepts that emerged across the semester and explore how these ideas inform their evolving roles as educators and leaders. Students will also articulate shifts in thinking or action inspired by course readings and discussions, and reflect on their growth as reflective practitioners

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, participants will gain the knowledge to:

1. Explain the foundational principles of the Science of Reading and describe how Nevada's definition of literacy aligns with evidence-based instructional practices.
2. Design and implement effective trauma-informed Tier 1 literacy instruction that integrates management strategies, structured routines, and supportive learning environments.
3. Analyze universal screening data and apply evidence-based instructional approaches to address student needs in phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.
4. Apply research-aligned strategies for word reading, comprehension, and writing development to strengthen students' access to complex texts.

5. Synthesize learning across course modules to reflect on instructional growth and develop actionable plans for implementing Science of Reading-aligned practices in their professional context.

Materials

Spear-Swerling, L. (Ed.). (2022). *Structured literacy interventions: Teaching students with reading difficulties, grades K-6*. Guilford Publications.

Certificate Completion Requirements

In this ten week course, participants will engage in asynchronous and synchronous learning opportunities. Full participation and attendance in all aspects of the course whether online or virtual are required to earn a certificate of professional development from the Nevada Department of Education for 45 hours as outlined below.

Optional Southern Utah University Graduate Credit: (Information to be added upon SUU approval)

Participants may earn either a certificate of professional development or may opt to receive 3 graduate credits from Southern Utah University.

Reading and Reflection

Participants are expected to complete all assigned readings and video viewings, and to thoughtfully engage with the 3Cs protocol to support meaningful learning and application. Reflective responses in this course are evaluated not only on the depth of thinking demonstrated through the 3C's Routine but also on the clarity and professionalism of the writing itself.

Rubric for Reflective Responses Using the 3C's Routine				
Criteria	5 – Effective	3 – Partially Effective	1 – Ineffective	Points Earned
Connections	Makes meaningful, relevant connections to personal experience, prior learning, or other texts; may include shifts in thinking or perspective	Connections are present but general, partially relevant, or lack depth or insight	Connections are vague, superficial, or missing; little relevance or personal insight evident	
Concepts	Clearly identifies central ideas or themes; explains their significance or relevance	Identifies some ideas but explanation lacks clarity, depth, or relevance	Key concepts are unclear, unsupported, or missing; lacks explanation or depth	
Changes	Describes thoughtful changes or insights; supports ideas with specific textual evidence	Mentions a change or insight but provides limited explanation or evidence	Change is unclear, unsupported, or absent; little or no reference to the text	

Writing Quality & Grammar	Writing is clear, well-organized, and coherent; grammar, mechanics, and sentence structure support readability with minimal or no errors	Writing is generally clear but includes noticeable errors in grammar, mechanics, or organization that occasionally affect clarity	Writing is unclear, disorganized, or contains frequent errors that impede understanding	
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Adapted from: Project Zero. (n.d.). *The 4 C's: A thinking routine from the Cultures of Thinking project*. Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Virtual Sessions

Participation Requirements

To receive a certificate of completion for 45 professional development hours or 3 graduate credits from Southern Utah University (optional), participants must:

- Attend nine facilitated, interactive Zoom sessions in full.
- Actively contribute to group learning and discussion.

Please note:

- Concurrent participation in other professional learning sessions during these Zoom meetings is not permitted.
- Sessions will not be recorded.
- AI notetaking bots are prohibited.
- Attending Zoom meetings from a moving vehicle is not permitted.

Zoom Norms

- Please join from a laptop or desktop computer, in a professional space, so you can fully engage in breakout rooms and contribute to shared documents.
- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking to minimize background noise.
- Use the Chat to share questions, comments, or wonderings throughout our time together.
- To help foster a sense of community, keep your camera on. If you experience connectivity issues or need to step away briefly, send a private Chat message to explain why your camera is off.

Success Criteria

Virtual Participation Rubric	
5- Full Contribution	1- Minimal or No Contribution
Actively contributed to group discussions and consistently provided input during collaborative learning activities.	Either did not attend the session or joined without contributing—listened without offering input or insight.

Survey

At the completion of the course, participants must complete a survey in order for their certificate to be issued. Please allow 2-3 weeks for certificates to be emailed.

Week 1

Welcome to Week 1. In this module, you'll be introduced to Nevada's definition of literacy alongside foundational principles from the science of reading to anchor your learning for the course. You'll also examine five essential Tier 1 instructional practices that work together to support a cohesive, integrated approach to effective literacy instruction.

Objectives

In this module you will be able to:

- Define Nevada's definition of literacy
- Explain Nevada's definition of the Science of Reading
- Describe Nevada's approach to Tier 1 literacy assessment and instruction

Assignment 1

Read: [PreK–12 Nevada State Literacy Plan](#)

- Nevada's definition of literacy (p. 4)
- Science of Reading in Nevada (pp. 5-6)
- A New Pathway Forward: A Comprehensive and Vertically Aligned Approach to Literacy (pp. 6-8)
- Tier 1 Instruction (pp. 14-27)
- Assessment: pp. 28-35

Submit: Use the [3 C's Thinking Routine](#) to reflect on your reading.

Once you have completed the assignment, follow the directions below to submit.

1. Select the **Upload** button to locate and upload the activity from your computer or the **More** button to choose Google or Office 365 to upload your assignment.
2. Click the **Submit Assignment** button.

Assignment 2

View: Dispelling Tier 1 Misconceptions: Why We Need Differentiated Literacy Instruction

1. Sign up for a free [edWeb](#) account.
2. Click the orange *JoinedWeb* tab at the top right of the page.
3. Complete the required fields.
4. Click on the tab titled *edWebinar Recordings & Quizzes*
5. Locate the “Search by key word, phrase, or presenter” field.
6. Enter the webinar title: **Dispelling Tier 1 Misconceptions: Why We Need Differentiated Literacy Instruction** (Leave the presenter field blank.)

Submit: Upload a screenshot of your transcript showing your *Minutes Viewed CE Quiz* score

Week 2

This week, you'll discover how strong classroom management and trauma-informed practices create the foundation for powerful literacy instruction. First, you'll explore how effective management strategies connect with the Science of Reading to boost student learning. Then, you'll learn how trauma can affect students and practice ways to build safe, supportive classrooms where every learner can thrive.

Objectives

In the first part of this this module you will be able to:

- Explain the relationship between classroom management and Science of Reading informed instruction, and how effective management practices enhance student learning outcomes.
- Describe five key elements of classroom management that support the successful implementation of high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction.

In the second part of this module you will be able to:

- Explain key characteristics and impacts of trauma on student learning and behavior.
- Articulate evidence-based practices for identifying and responding to trauma in the classroom, with a focus on fostering safe, supportive, and responsive learning environments.

Assignment 1

View: Science of Reading Webinar

Directions

- Sign in to your [edWeb](#) account.
- Click on the tab titled *edWebinar Recordings & Quizzes*
- Locate the “Search by key word, phrase, or presenter” field.
- Enter the webinar title: **Put the Science of Reading in Action with Effective Classroom Management.** (Leave Presenter Name blank)
- Click on view recording. (58 min)

Submit: Upload a screenshot of your transcript showing your *Minutes Viewed CE Quiz* score.

Assignment 2

Read the following sections from [AIR Projects e-resource](#)

- What is trauma?
- How do we respond to stress?
- What is the impact of exposure to trauma?
- What does this mean for schools?

Read: [Best Practices for Trauma-Informed Instruction](#)

Submit: Use the [3C's Thinking Routine](#) to reflect on your reading.

Week 3

In this module, you'll learn how to use universal screening data to identify student reading needs in phonological awareness, phonics, and fluency. You'll explore a series of flowcharts designed for Kindergarten through Grade 2 educators that guide you in matching assessment results to evidence-based instructional practices. By the end, you'll understand how to apply these tools to accelerate reading growth through targeted, responsive instruction tailored to student skill development.

Objectives

By the end of this module participants will be able to:

- Use assessment data to inform evidence-based word reading skill instruction.

Read:

Step 1: Select **one** grade level resource.

Step 2: Read the Flowchart overview and How to use the flowchart

- Kindergarten: [Empowering Young Readers by Using Assessment Data to Inform Evidence-Based Word Reading Skill Instruction](#)
- Grade 1 [Empowering Young Readers by Using Assessment Data to Inform Evidence-Based Word Reading Skill Instruction](#)
- Grade 2 [Empowering Young Readers by Using Assessment Data to Inform Evidence-Based Word Reading Skill Instruction](#)

Submit: Use the [3 C's Routine](#) to reflect on your reading.

Week 4

This week, you'll explore how young readers learn to recognize words automatically. You'll also examine research-based strategies for delivering explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and word recognition, with an emphasis on assessment-informed interventions.

Objectives

By the end of this module you will be able to:

- Explain the developmental processes and instructional strategies that lead to automatic word reading in beginning readers, including phonemic awareness, grapheme–phoneme knowledge, decoding skills, and systematic phonics instruction.
- Apply research-based strategies for explicit instruction in phonemic awareness and word recognition, including assessment-informed interventions, to support accelerated learning for students performing below grade level.

Assignment 1

Read: [What Teachers Need to Know and Do to Teach Letter–Sounds, Phonemic Awareness, Word Reading, and Phonics](#)

Read: Spear-Swerling, L. (Ed.). (2022). *Structured literacy interventions: Teaching students with reading difficulties, grades K-6*. Guilford Publications.

Chapter 2: Structured Literacy Interventions for Phonemic Awareness and Basic Word Recognition Skills (pp. 23-39).

Submit: Use the [3 C's Routine](#) to reflect on your reading.

Week 5

In this module, you'll examine the critical role of reading fluency in developing proficient readers. You'll identify evidence-based practices and text types that strengthen both fluency and comprehension, and explore actionable strategies for integrating fluency instruction into classroom and intervention settings.

Objectives

- Explain the role of reading fluency in developing proficient readers.
- Apply evidence-based fluency practices and text types that enhance fluency and comprehension

Assignment 1

View: Teaching Reading Fluency: The Art and Science Behind It

Directions:

- Sign in to your [edWeb](#) account.
- Click on the tab titled *edWebinar Recordings & Quizzes*
- Locate the “Search by key word, phrase, or presenter” field.
- Enter the webinar title: Teaching Reading Fluency: The Art and Science Behind It. (Leave the presenter field blank.)
- with Drs. Tim Rasinski and Chase Young

Submit: Upload a screenshot of your transcript showing your *Minutes Viewed CE Quiz* score.

Assignment 2

Read: Spear-Swerling, L. (Ed.). (2022). *Structured literacy interventions: Teaching students with reading difficulties, grades K-6*. Guilford Publications.

Chapter 5: Structured Literacy Interventions for Reading Fluency (pp. 95-111).

Submit: Use the [3 C's Routine](#) to reflect on your reading.

Week 6

In this module, you'll consider why intentional vocabulary instruction is essential for unlocking meaning across texts and disciplines. You'll explore how artificial intelligence offers new possibilities for selecting and analyzing words, and how morphological awareness equips learners to build generative word knowledge.

Objectives:

By the end of this module you will be able to

- Examine emerging applications of artificial intelligence in vocabulary instruction, including how AI tools can analyze linguistic features, streamline word selection, and support comprehension through strategically selected texts
- Describe how vocabulary development, both word-specific and generative, supports reading comprehension.
- Apply research-based instructional strategies that integrate morphological awareness and background knowledge across disciplines.

Assignment 1

View: The New Science of Vocabulary: AI Enhanced Approaches to Word Selection with Elfrieda Hiebert

Directions:

- Sign in to your [edWeb](#) account.
- Click on the tab titled *edWebinar Recordings & Quizzes*
- Locate the “Search by key word, phrase, or presenter” field.
- Enter the webinar title: The New Science of Vocabulary: AI Enhanced Approaches to Word Selection with Elfrieda Hiebert (Leave the PresenterName field blank).

Submit: Upload a screenshot of your transcript showing your *Minutes Viewed CE Quiz* score.

Assignment 2

View: Vocabulary Processes and Reading Comprehension: A Dynamic Assemblage of Concepts

Directions:

- Sign in to your [edWeb](#) account.
- Click on the tab titled *edWebinar Recordings & Quizzes*
- Locate the “Search by key word, phrase, or presenter” field.
- Enter the webinar title: Vocabulary Processes and Reading Comprehension: A Dynamic Assemblage of Concepts. (Leave the presenter field blank.)

Submit: Upload a screenshot of your transcript showing your *Minutes Viewed CE Quiz* score.

Week 7

In this module, you'll explore why structured before, during, and after-reading practices are essential for making complex content accessible. You'll consider how evidence-based strategies not only strengthen understanding of informational texts but also build consistency in instructional routines that empower struggling readers to engage meaningfully with content.

Objectives:**By the end of this module you will be able to**

- Explain evidence-based strategies that enhance content learning and reading comprehension, and consider how to implement these practices consistently.
- Describe the role of structured before, during, and after-reading practices in supporting comprehension of expository texts for students with reading difficulties.

Assignment 1

View: [The Science of Reading Comprehension with Nell Duke](#)

Read: Spear-Swerling, L. (Ed.). (2022). *Structured literacy interventions: Teaching students with reading difficulties, grades K-6*. Guilford Publications.

Chapter 8: Structured Reading Comprehension Intervention for Students with Reading Difficulties (pp. 162-187).

Submit: Use the [3 C's Routine](#) to reflect on your reading.

Week 8

In this module, you will explore why written expression is a critical dimension of literacy, especially for students with reading difficulties. In this module, you'll explore why structured language interventions are essential for supporting writing development and comprehension. You'll consider how evidence-based practices grounded in explicit instruction, scaffolding, and integration with reading equip learners to express ideas clearly, connect knowledge across disciplines, and build confidence as writers.

Objectives

By the end of this module you will be able to

- Explain evidence-based practices that strengthen writing development and consider how to implement these strategies consistently in classroom instruction.
- Apply structured language interventions in supporting written expression for students with reading difficulties.

Assignment 1

View: [Science of Reading with Steve Graham](#)

Read: Spear-Swerling, L. (Ed.). (2022). *Structured literacy interventions: Teaching students with reading difficulties, grades K-6*. Guilford Publications.

Chapter 9: Structured Language Interventions for Written Expression (pp 189-212).

Submit: Use the [3 C's Routine](#) to reflect on your reading.

Week 9

This final assignment invites you to revisit and synthesize your learning from the past eight weeks, drawing on your engagement with the readings, videos, and discussions. Now, you'll weave those insights into a cohesive narrative that captures your growth, enduring understandings, and future intentions.

Culminating Reflective Assignment

Assignment Overview

Revisit your 3C's submissions and reflect on your growth as a reflective practitioner. Consider your takeaways from discussions with colleagues and collaborative notetakers from our Zoom sessions. What have you learned about yourself as a thinker, educator, or leader? Write a culminating reflective paper (minimum of 3-4 pages, double-spaced) that addresses the following prompts:

1. Patterns of Connection

- What recurring connections did you notice between the texts and your teaching context or professional learning?
- How did your perspective shift over time?
- Highlight 2–3 moments of personal or professional resonance that felt especially meaningful.

2. Conceptual Anchors

- Identify 2–3 key concepts or ideas that emerged across multiple weeks.
- Why do these concepts matter to you?
- How might they shape your future practice, leadership, or collaboration?

3. Catalysts for Change

- What changes in thinking or action have you already made or plan to make based on your learning in this course?
- Support your insights with specific references to chapters or weekly reflections.
- What have you learned about yourself as an educator or teacher leader? Consider changes at the personal, classroom, and school level.

Success Criteria

This reflection is evaluated using a 20-point rubric that emphasizes depth of thought, clarity of conceptual understanding, evidence of change, and adherence to academic writing standards. Students are expected to draw on course texts, videos, and discussions; articulate the significance of central ideas; and demonstrate how their thinking or practice has evolved. Writing should reflect graduate-level quality, including organization, coherence, and proper use of APA 7th edition guidelines.

Culminating Reflection Rubric				
Criteria	5 – <i>Effective</i>	3 – <i>Partially Effective</i>	1 – <i>Ineffective</i>	Points Earned
Patterns of Connection	Clearly identifies recurring connections with rich examples from course texts, videos, and discussions; demonstrates meaningful shifts in perspective and deep personal resonance	Identifies some connections but examples lack depth, clarity, or consistency; limited evidence of shifts in thinking	Connections are minimal, unclear, or lack depth; little reflection or personal relevance	

Conceptual Anchors	Selects key concepts and explains their significance and future impact with clarity and insight	Identifies concepts but explanation is general, incomplete, or lacks reflection on significance or application	Concepts are vague, missing, or not clearly explained; lacks reflection on relevance or application	
Catalysts for Change	Provides evidence of change in thinking or action with supporting references; considers impact at one or more levels	Mentions change but provides limited explanation, evidence, or consideration of impact	Mentions change without clear evidence or references; limited or no consideration of impact	
APA 7th edition Guidelines	Writing is clear, well-organized, and adheres to APA conventions (in-text citations, reference list, formatting) with no or minimal errors	Writing generally follows APA guidelines but includes several errors in citation, formatting, or clarity	Writing does not follow APA guidelines; citations, references, or formatting are missing or incorrect	

The culminating reflective paper is due Week 10.

Week 10

The purpose of this culminating Zoom session is to foster collective reflection, celebration, and professional dialogue by sharing final projects with colleagues. Through presenting your synthesized learning you will engage in collaborative meaning-making, honor diverse perspectives, and deepen connections. This session provides a space to recognize individual growth, highlight enduring understandings, and inspire future practice by learning from one another's insights and commitments.

Objectives

1. Present final projects to colleagues in order to synthesize and share key learnings from the course.
2. Engage in collaborative reflection and dialogue that honors diverse perspectives.

Presentation

Participants will briefly share key insights from their paper, connecting what they have learned to their professional or academic practice, and reflect on how this will impact their practice moving forward. The emphasis is on thoughtful synthesis and personal learning rather than formal delivery, encouraging open discussion and peer learning.

- 2-3 minutes for presentation
- 2-3 minutes for questions and feedback

Submit: Paper will be submitted in Canvas. See Week 9 for criteria and grading rubric.

Evaluation

Thank you for participating in this course—we truly value your feedback. Please complete the survey, and then click the **Mark as Done** button located in the lower right corner of this page. Once marked, continue to the next page to finalize your course completion.

[Survey](#)

Certificate of Professional Learning Hours

Your course facilitator will need to grade all assignments before your certificate or graduate credits (optional) will be issued. Please allow up to 2 weeks for your certificate to be emailed after successful completion of the course requirements. Graduate credits will be received through Southern Utah University and the timeline may vary.