Literacy: Beyond the Basics
How the Brain Learns to Read
Longwood University

Instructor: Maria R. Hamilton

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Class Description: Have you ever wondered what happens between the time your eyes look at a word and your brain processes it? What seems easy to some is much more difficult for others. This class is an introduction to what science has revealed about how instruction reshapes the brain to develop the ability to read and the signs of dyslexia to look for when that development does not easily occur. How the Brain Learns to Read will put critical literacy knowledge at your fingertips to inform identification and instructional decisions for vulnerable readers in your classroom or school.

Class Overview: Literacy: Beyond the Basics is a series of courses designed to be self-paced with asynchronous activities and discussions. How the Brain Learns to Read is an introduction to the science behind the critical, daily literacy decisions you make in your classroom or school. You will finish this course with a deeper understanding of how literacy instruction reshapes and develops the brain to become capable of reading and writing, as well as, what to do when that development does not come easy. This class will provide opportunities for you to explore effective strategies for teaching literacy and assessments, screeners, and progress monitoring tools to help make informed instructional decisions. You will grow in knowledge and confidence to lead and advocate for the literacy needs of your classroom or school.

How the Brain Learns to Read is designed to be a self-paced class and does not require participants to complete the work at the same time or participate in activities or discussions at the same time. However, reviewing what your fellow participants post and initiating discussions with them will greatly enhance your learning and overall experience.

Text:
No text is required for this class. Readings will be posted online.

Goals & Objectives:

- Understand the "big picture" of how the reading brain works.
- Identify peer reviewed research about the brain, that informs literacy instruction, by contributing to a collaborative database.
- Evaluate a current reading program through identification of key instructional components for literacy development.
- Explore the "look fors" and "red flags" associated with dyslexia.
- Examine reader profiles to identify characteristics of struggling readers.
- Compare literacy screeners to discover new tools and uses for assessing struggling readers.
- Use assessment information to inform targeted instructional decisions.

SCHEDULE		
Dates	Topics	Assignments
Module 1 **Week 1**	**Introduction** **A Look at the Brain** What we know about how the brain processes written language. Why is it important to consider research when teaching children to read?	Readings & Activities Explore reading research. Collaborative Literacy Research Database
Module 2 **Week 2**	**Dyslexia** What happens when students cannot read? What can be done about it?	Readings & Activities How does my reading program match up?
Module 3 **Week 3**	**Case Studies** Who is sitting in my reading groups? A closer look at the children in your classrooms.	Readings & Activities A Closer Look
Module 4 **Week 4**	**Assessment** Using assessments to understand literacy needs.	Readings & Activities Assess and Reflect

Class Assignments: Instructions are provided for all assignments within the online class modules. The following are general descriptions of the expectations.

Collaborative Literacy Research Database – Add at least one peer reviewed, literacy research article to the class Google form.

Reading Program Evaluation – Complete a comparison checklist of your current reading program. Write a summary of its strengths and weaknesses, outlining ways to make improvements.

A Closer Look – Using the information from Kilpatrick's six case studies, take a closer look at one of your students, current or former. Which example do they emulate? What can you do to help this student?

Assessment Activity – Take a deeper dive into the needs of the student you chose for A Closer Look. Which assessment will provide the most useful information to inform instruction for that student? How will you use that information to formulate a plan for instruction?

Participate in Class Activities:

Each module will have at least one activity that you will be asked to complete and reflect upon. These activities are assigned so you will have hands-on experience with applying what you have learned to teaching literacy.

1. Introduce yourself through the discussion board (5 points)
2. Weekly reflections (10 points each)
3. Complete all readings and viewings (20 points)

Class Grading:

Participation	65
Collaborative Database	25
Program Evaluation	25
A Closer Look	25
Assess and Reflect	60
Total Possible Points	200

Grading Scale
Non-credit classes are Pass/Fail. A minimum of 80% (160 points) is required to pass.

CLASS POLICIES

Student Responsibility:

It is your responsibility to inform yourself of, and to observe, all regulations and procedures required by the university. In no case will a regulation be waived or an exception granted because students plead ignorance of the regulation or assert that they were not informed of the regulation by an advisor or other authority.

Communication Policy:

The instructor will respond to student messages within 24-48 hours (except holidays), generally through email. For all assignments, feedback will be delivered within one week of the due date.

Attendance & Participation Policy:

Attendance for online courses is determined by how many times and for how long you access the Canvas course (this information is available for each student to the instructor), your participation in the assignments, and your timeliness in submitting requested work or response. Online courses can get away from you if not carefully scheduled. Take the time to review your online commitments, schedule regular and consistent time to be online, and stick to the schedule. You are expected to participate in all Canvas activities. Failure to participate in Canvas activities may impair academic performance and result in a lower grade. You must assume full responsibility for an online presence.

Technical Assistance:

Please contact our office for assistance with Canvas: Shelly Madden, Professional Studies Coordinator, maddenrr@longwood.edu Office Phone: (434) 395-2719 or Cell Phone: (434) 808-2496.

Class Evaluation:

At the conclusion of the course, each student will have the opportunity to evaluate the class and instructor through Canvas. Your feedback is important to us. Please take the time to complete the online evaluation.

References

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