

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
Literacy Program

EDRD 830.002 – Theory, Research, & Practice in Literacy: Birth through Middle Childhood
3 Credits, Spring 2023
Tuesdays 4:30-7:10p 1507 Thompson Hall, Fairfax Campus

Faculty

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Prerequisites/Corequisites

EDUC 800 and EDRS 810

University Catalog Course Description

Explores emergent through intermediate literacy. Topics include literacy acquisition and development in academically and linguistically diverse young children; historical and current trends in theories of literacy development; cognitive, linguistic, sociocultural, and instructional influences on literacy development; and assessment. Implications for teacher education and policy are explored. Individual research projects will connect literacy to students' areas of interest.

Course Overview

This course is designed to enhance students' understanding of early literacy research, theories, and practice. Readings will include foundational research that supports current explorations and the enlarging scope of needed research to better understand the diverse literacy needs of young learners. Students in this course will consider their own positionality and employ a critical lens to explore an ever-broadening variety of authors, voices, perspectives, methodologies, populations, connections, and topics. The course utilizes a face-to-face seminar format based on discussion of class topics and readings as well as related experiences and research. Students are expected to complete all class readings prior to each session and to be prepared to engage in active dialogue and sharing of ideas. Activities will include small group discussions, presentations, whole class sharing, and reflection.

Course Delivery Method

This course will be delivered using a seminar format.

Learner Outcomes or Objectives

This course is designed to enable students to do the following:

A. Students will be able to summarize, synthesize and compare specific psychological and linguistic influences on literacy acquisition and development in early, middle, and later childhood.

- B. Students will be able to summarize, synthesize and compare specific socio- cultural influences on literacy acquisition and development in early, middle, and later childhood.
- C. Students will be able to synthesize and analyze instructional influences on children's developing literacy.
- D. Students will read original research and classic research summaries in order to identify and compare the variety of theoretical perspectives and research designs currently used to study literacy.
- E. Students will be able to compare and contrast specific literacy studies in terms of methodology and results.
- F. Students will review research studies in an area of personal interest that have encouraged the use of specific classroom applications such as reciprocal teaching or authentic assessment.

Professional Standards

Not applicable

Required Texts

Cassano, C. M. & Dougherty, S. M. (2018). *Pivotal research in early literacy: Foundational studies and current practices*. Guilford.

Recommended Texts

American Psychological Association. (2020). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1037/0000165-000>

Neuman, S.B. & Dickinson, D.K. (2011). *Handbook of early literacy research (Vol 3)*. Guilford.

National Early Literacy Panel (2008). *Developing early literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel*. Washington, DC: National Center for Family Literacy. (Follow Blackboard link for free electronic copy)

Course Performance Evaluation

Students are expected to submit all assignments on time in the manner outlined by the instructor (e.g., Blackboard, hard copy).

• Assignments and/or Examinations

- **Synthesis of readings (30%) Due date varies**

For three of the assigned research article readings, you will prepare a written, focused synthesis with critique and connections to the broader landscape of early literacy research. Two syntheses are designated on the syllabus. Each student will work with the instructor to determine the readings for the third synthesis/critiques. Criteria will be discussed in class.

- **Discussion facilitation (10%) Due date varies**

You will lead a class discussion that is focused on your choice of assigned synthesis/critiques. The criteria for discussion group leader are included on a handout and will be discussed in class

- First year students: Integrated review (45%). Advanced student option: Synthesis paper (45%)
 - Topic & research questions due 2/21
 - List of potential sources due 3/7
 - Outline due 3/28
 - Draft due to peer reviewer 4/11
 - Final Paper Due 5/6 by midnight

- *Integrated review*: You will write an integrated review of studies on a topic of your choice that is related to early literacy. The review must include: an introduction; specific sections related to the topic of the review; a section that summarizes specific applications of this area of literacy research to practices in instructional settings; a section that summarizes gaps and needs in the extant literature, including a critical examination of the engagement (or lack thereof) of diverse perspectives, populations, and methodologies used to explore the topic; and an overall summary. The components and structure of the review will be discussed in class.

- *Synthesis paper*: You will write a detailed synthesis of quantitative research on a topic of your choice that is related to early literacy. The synthesis needs to include: an introduction/purpose statement; specific sections related to the topic of the synthesis; a section summarizing the overall statistical effect sizes and impact of the included research; a section that summarizes gaps and needs in the extant literature, including a critical examination of the engagement (or lack thereof) of diverse perspectives, populations, and methodologies used to explore the topic; and an overall summary. The components and structure of the synthesis will be discussed in class.
 - In-class presentation of integrated review or synthesis paper (5%) **Due 5/2**
You will present your findings in a brief, in-class format. The components and structure of the presentation will be discussed in class.

- **Other Requirements**
 - Attendance and Participation (10%)
You are responsible for completing the assigned reading and participating in all class discussions. This includes locating, reading, and discussing a research article of choice that corresponds with the designated topic, but includes a different perspective, participant sample, methodology, or other content to bring diverse viewpoints and a critical lens to our weekly discussions.

As this course is designed to develop student knowledge of and critical approach to early literacy research, you will bring to each class 2-4 written, open discussion questions to clarify the readings, connect to prior knowledge, and identify areas of future research to include expanded perspectives and populations to gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of early literacy. Questions will be collected each class.

- It is expected that assignments will be electronically turned in on time (the beginning of the class in which they are due). However, it is recognized that students occasionally have serious problems that prevent work completion. If such a dilemma arises, please speak to the instructor in a timely fashion.
- Graduate students must become familiar with APA (American Psychological Association) writing/formatting style. All written assignments prepared outside of class will be evaluated for content and presentation as graduate-level, academic writing. The American Psychological Association, Seventh Edition (APA) style will be followed for all written work. All written work unless otherwise noted must be completed electronically and should be proofread carefully. The organizations of your papers (e.g. headings, organization, references, citations, etc.) should follow APA style. APA has a helpful website – <http://www.apastyle.org/pubmanual.html>.

- **Grading**

- A = 94%-100%
- A- = 90%-93%
- B+ = 87%-89%
- B = 80%-86%
- C = 75%-79%
- F = 0% - 74%

Professional Dispositions

See <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/polices-procedures/>

Class Schedule

Date	Topics, Guiding Questions, and Assignments	Readings
Week 1 1/24	<p>Introduction Course overview Assignment descriptions Timeline and Policy Markers</p> <p><i>Defining and Conceptualizing Emergent and Early Literacy</i> What is your existing knowledge of emergent and early literacy? How do you define emergent literacy? What is the distinction between emergent and early literacy?</p> <p><i>**Process discussion: Evaluating research validity and reliability; Database searching</i></p>	<p><i>Assigned Readings:</i> Petscher et al., 2021</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Purcell-Gates, 2001 Ruddell, R. B. & Ruddell, M. R. (1994). van Kleeck, 1998</p>
Week 2 1/31	<p><i>Historical and theoretical background: Defining and conceptualizing early literacy</i></p>	<p><i>Assigned Readings:</i> Alexander, P. A., & Fox, E., 2013 Gough & Tunmer, 1986 Scarborough, 2001 (HB 1) Storch & Whitehurst, 2002</p>

	<p>How has literacy development been conceptualized over time? Where are we as a field?</p> <p><i>**Process discussion: Writing brief synthesis statements</i></p>	<p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Lonigan, C. J. (2006). Senechal, LeFevre, Smith-Chant, & Colton, 2001 Rhyner, Haebig, & West, 2009 Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998</p>
<p>Week 3</p> <p>2/7</p>	<p><i>Oral Language Ability</i></p> <p>How is oral language defined as related to literacy? What are the prevailing theoretical perspectives on how children develop language? What environmental and developmental factors most contribute to risk and resilience in oral language development?</p> <p>Discussion Leader Choices Due</p>	<p><i>Required Readings:</i> Cassano & Dougherty ch 1-2 Barnes & Dickinson, 2017 Simmons et al., 2023 Goksun et al., 2010 * Article of Choice</p> <p><i>EXIT TICKET:</i> Brief synthesis statement</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Handbook 3: Ch 3, 4 Dickinson & Porsche, 2011 Huttenlocher, Vasilyeva, Cymerman, & Levine, 2002 Mashburn et al., 2009</p>
<p>Week 4</p> <p>2/14</p>	<p><i>Code-Related Skills: Phonological Awareness</i></p> <p>How is phonological awareness defined? How is phonological awareness related to language and literacy? What are the prevailing theoretical perspectives on how children develop phonological awareness? What environmental and developmental factors most contribute to risk and resilience in phonological awareness? How does phonological awareness relate to phonological processing and alphabetic skills?</p> <p><i>**Process discussion: Writing a Literature Review & Writing a Research Synthesis</i></p>	<p>Cassano & Dougherty ch 5 Bradley & Bryant, 1983 Lonigan et al., 2009 Goswami (2000) Scarborough & Brady (2002) * Article of Choice</p> <p><i>EXIT TICKET:</i> Brief synthesis statement</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> *Handbook 3: Ch 5 Anthony et al., 2011 Troia 1999 Handbook 1: Ch 8 (Review Scarborough's Rope) Anthony & Lonigan (2002)</p>
<p>Week 5</p> <p>2/21</p>	<p><i>Code-Related Skills: Print Knowledge and the Alphabetic Principle</i></p> <p>How is print knowledge defined? What is the relationship between print knowledge and other aspects of developmental competence? What environmental and</p>	<p><i>Required Readings:</i> Cassano & Dougherty ch 4 Clayton et al., 2020 Landerl et al., 2018 Piasta & Wagner (2010) * Article of Choice</p>

	<p>developmental factors most contribute to risk and resilience in print knowledge?</p> <p>What is the alphabetic principle? How do emergent literacy skills relate to acquisition of the alphabetic principle?</p> <p>How does a child’s concept of word reflect knowledge of code-based skills and metalanguage?</p> <p><i>*DUE: Potential paper topic and research questions</i></p>	<p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i></p> <p>* Handbook 2: Ch 9 Bialystok & Luk, 2007 Bus et al., 2001 Ehri, 2005 Justice, Pence, Bowles, & Wiggins, 2006 NICHD ECCRN, 2005 Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax, & Perney, 2003 Flanigan, 2007</p>
<p>Week 6 2/28</p>	<p><i>Code-Related Skills: Phonics Development</i></p> <p>How is phonics knowledge defined? What is the relationship between knowledge of letter-sound relationships and other aspects of developmental competence? What environmental and developmental/cognitive factors most contribute to risk and resilience in phonics knowledge?</p> <p>What is the alphabetic principle? How do emergent literacy skills relate to acquisition of the alphabetic principle?</p> <p>How does a child’s concept of word reflect knowledge of code-based skills and metalanguage?</p>	<p><i>Required Readings:</i></p> <p>Ehri, 2020 Gonzales-Frey & Ehri, 2021 TBD * Article of choice</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> In Wks 4-6 Bb folder</p>
<p>Week 7 3/7</p>	<p><i>Prediction of Reading</i></p> <p>What is the contribution of background knowledge, oral language, and code-related factors to later reading ability? At what time points do these skills make their greatest contributions? How does teacher knowledge impact classroom instruction and influence student outcomes?</p> <p><i>*DUE: Search the literature & handbooks to identify key research studies in your area that are critical to your piece. Solidify your (lit review/synthesis) questions. Then start reading deeply and outlining your argumentation for your draft.</i></p>	<p><i>Required Readings:</i></p> <p>NELP, 2008: Ch 1, 2, 5 (focus on 2 & 5) Cervetti et al., 2022 Piasta et al., 2020 Cutting & Scarborough, 2006 *Article of Choice</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Gee (2004) Dickinson, Golinkoff, & Hirsh-Pasek (2010) Kendeou et al., 2009 Juel (2006) Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) Hart & Risley (1995) NELP responses- see BB folder</p>

Week 8 3/14	Mason Spring break	We will not meet in person this week. Please continue to read and work on your paper outline.
Week 9 3/21	<p><i>Early Literacy Assessment and Policy Considerations</i></p> <p>What approaches currently prevail in the assessment and evaluation of early literacy development? Which assessment needs are being adequately met and which are not? To what extent have these instruments and approaches been scrutinized for psychometric quality? What aspects of emergent and early literacy remain elusive to assessment? What types of assessment are endorsed by current educational policies?</p> <p><i>Early Literacy Policy</i></p> <p>What are the major policy issues in early literacy?</p>	<p>Herring et al., 2022 Pena & Halle, 2011 Miciak & Fletcher, 2020 Wagner, 2020 * Article of Choice</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Handbook 3: Ch 24 Invernizzi et al., 2005 Invernizzi et al., 2010 Handbook 1: Ch 26 Handbook 2: Ch 29 Kuhn et al., 2010 Lonigan, 2006 Wilson & Lonigan, 2010 Vellutino et al., 1996</p>
Week 10 3/28	<p><i>Oral Language & Vocabulary: Instruction and Intervention</i></p> <p>What are the prevailing approaches to language instruction in early education? To what extent do these reflect prevailing theories of language development? How is language instruction differentiated for children as a function of individual differences? What educational policies shape the nature of language instruction in early education? **DUE: Paper outline</p>	<p><i>Required Readings:</i> NELP, Ch 7 (skim) Baker et al., 2020 Dickinson science article, 2011 Justice, Jiang, & Strasser, 2018 *Article of choice</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Cabell et al. (2011) Dickinson, McCabe, & Clark-Chiarelli, 2004 Handbook 1: Ch 18 Handbook 2: Ch 20 Handbook 3: Ch 22- Dickinson, Freiberg, & Barnes Justice, Mashburn, Pence, & Wiggins, 2008 Marulis & Neuman, 2010 Neuman, Newman, & Dwyer, 2011 Risko et al., 2008 Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006</p>
Week 11 4/4	<i>Process workshop:</i> Academic writing for papers and presentations (You will share your draft and materials for discussion with classmates)	
Week 12 4/11	<i>Code-Related Skills: Instruction and Intervention (includes phonological awareness, print knowledge, and phonics)</i>	<p>NELP Report: Ch 3 Brown et al., 2020 Mesmer & Williams, 2015</p>

	<p>What are the prevailing approaches and “best practice” suggestions for code-focused instruction in early education? To what extent do these reflect current theories of literacy and language development? How is this instruction differentiated for children as a function of individual differences? To what extent does early instruction result in short- and long-term advantages to the developing child? How is educational policy and current research translated in the field with respect to phonological awareness and phonics? What barriers impact effective implementation?</p> <p><i>**DUE: share draft in progress with critical friends (via email)</i></p>	<p>Dilgard et al., 2020 Strang & Piasta, 2016 *Article of choice</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Handbook 3: Ch 17 Denton et al. 2013 Jackson et al., 2006 Justice, Kaderavek, et al., 2009 Landry, Swank, Smith, Assel, & Gunnewig, 2006 Piasta & Wagner, 2010 Snow & Juel, 2005 Xue & Meisels, 2004 Handbook 1: Ch 11, 21 & 22</p>
<p>Week 13 4/18</p>	<p><i>Diverse Populations: Instruction and Intervention</i></p> <p>What specific instructional considerations are needed to enhance successful literacy learning for students who need additional support to develop literacy in English? How is educational policy and current research translated in the field with respect to educating diverse learners such as ELLs and students at risk of dyslexia? What barriers impact effective implementation?</p>	<p><i>Required Readings:</i> Mancilla-Martinez & Lesaux, 2017 Graham, Silva, & Restrepo, 2022 Milner, 2020 Nation 2019 *Article of Choice</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Handbook 3: Chs 8, 9 Castro, Paez, Dickinson, & Frede, 2011 Chatterji, 2006 Ford, Cabell, Konold, Invernizzi, & Gartland, 2013 Hart & Risley, 1995 (Book) Lesaux & Geva, 2006 Zepeda, Castro, & Cronin, 2011</p>
<p>Week 14 4/25</p>	<p><i>Fluency and Comprehension: Shared Book Reading & Text Considerations</i></p> <p>What aspects of early interactive reading most contribute to short- and long-term literacy outcomes in children? What theories currently prevail for explaining qualities of these interactions?</p> <p>How should text be considered as a tool for fluency and comprehension for all young children?</p>	<p><i>Required Readings:</i> Cassano & Dougherty ch. 6, 9 Huennekens & Xu, 2016 Hwang, Cabell, & Joyner, 2022 MacKay, Lynch, Duncan, & Deacon, 2021 *Article of Choice</p> <p><i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Handbook 3: Ch 13, 16 Hiebert & Fisher, 2007 Hindman, Connor, Jewkes, & Morrison, 2008 Mol & Bus, 2011 Mol, Bus, & de Jong, 2009 Purcell-Gates, Duke, & Martineau, 2007</p>

		Wasik, Bond, & Hindman, 2006 Zucker, Justice, Piasta, & Kaderavek, 2010 NELP report: Ch 4
Week 15 5/2	<i>Writing and connecting early literacy skills</i> How does encoding help children connect their developing alphabetic and phonological skills? How does text experience and engagement support emergent and early writing development? <i>In-class Final presentations</i>	<i>Required Readings:</i> Cassano & Dougherty ch 3, 12 Kim & Schnatschneider, 2016 Puranik et al., 2018 Rowe, 2018 *Article of choice <i>Additional Foundational Readings:</i> Justice, Skibbe, & Bowles, 2007 TBD
5/6	**Final papers due via email by 11:59p	

Note: Faculty reserves the right to alter the schedule as necessary, with notification to students.

Core Values Commitment

The College of Education and Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles: <http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>.

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

Policies

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the Mason Honor Code (see <https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>).
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see <https://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>).
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their Mason email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students **solely** through their Mason email account.
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with George Mason University Disability Services. Approved accommodations will begin at the time the written letter from Disability Services is received by the instructor (see <https://ds.gmu.edu/>).
- Students must silence all sound emitting devices during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.

Campus Resources

- Support for submission of assignments to VIA should be directed to viahelp@gmu.edu or <https://cehd.gmu.edu/aero/assessments> . Questions or concerns regarding use of Blackboard should be directed to <https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/>.
- For information on student support resources on campus, see <https://ctfe.gmu.edu/teaching/student-support-resources-on-campus>

Notice of mandatory reporting of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking:

As a faculty member, I am designated as a “Non-Confidential Employee,” and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, sexual harassment, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per [University Policy 1202](#). If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason’s confidential resources, such as [Student Support and Advocacy Center](#) (SSAC) at 703-380-1434 or [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS) at 703-993-2380. You may also seek assistance or support measures from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator by calling 703-993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, please visit our website <https://cehd.gmu.edu/students/> .

