

LITERACY INTERVENTION IN THE ELEMENTARY GRADES: A PROGRAM FOR LITERACY LEADERS



CERTIFICATE OFFERED: 16-CREDIT GRADUATE CERTIFICATE

The Literacy program offers a four-course, 16-credit graduate certificate that focuses on leadership in literacy assessment and instruction for teachers and administrators working with children in elementary school. Taken as a whole, the certificate represents the cornerstones of literacy instruction. Courses will examine effective practices in reading and writing, including reading and writing across the curriculum, successful approaches to literacy assessment, intervention strategies, and designs for differentiating instruction that address the needs of all learners.

The courses offered through this certificate program are geared toward in-service professionals who desire deeper knowledge of literacy assessment and instruction but may not wish to pursue an academic degree at present. However, the certificate's design allows interested students to apply the courses towards a master's degree or CAGS, in the event they wish to apply for and are accepted to a certificate or degree program.

The four-course School of Education certificate consists of the following topics:

- Topical Seminar in Literacy
- Seminar in Literacy Assessment
- Reading Strategies for Struggling Learners
- Literacy Development for English Language Learners

Why take this program?

Recently, national attention has focused on the literacy skills, particularly in reading, of the youngest students in our country's public schools. The federally-funded Reading First program and other policies and programs stemming from No Child Left Behind have heightened attention to reading preparation in the early grades. This is, of course, critically important, but an unintended consequence in many school settings has been diminished attention and resources aimed at improving the literacy capabilities of students in upper elementary grades. Yet, the need for high-quality literacy instruction is particularly great for these students as they begin to confront longer and more complex reading and writing tasks across all curriculum areas.

An examination of trends in students' scores on national and state assessments supports the need to strengthen literacy instruction offered to students in the later elementary grades. At the state level in Massachusetts, where the MCAS is given to children beginning in the third grade, student gains have not increased significantly in the past two years of testing, and in the most recent assessments, a slight decline in fourth-grade reading scores was reported. Furthermore, results indicate that the racial and linguistic gap continues to persist, with African-American and Latino students lagging behind their White peers. Similar outcomes are evident in the most recent results of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which indicates that across all levels and racial groups, students' scores do not

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improve as they progress beyond fourth grade.

Such indicators make visible the need for instruction that will foster literacy growth for students in the later elementary grades. Literacy must be at the heart of all efforts to improve children's academic achievement; without proficiency in reading and writing, students will struggle to meet the benchmarks set by national and state tests, and they will be ill-prepared to meet the rigors of secondary school and the demands of higher level academic work.

This certificate will prepare teachers, principals, and other school leaders to optimize literacy learning opportunities for students in the middle grades. In collaboration with School of Education faculty and their in-service colleagues, participants will read, analyze, and interpret related research and theory, and they will explore ways to apply the evidence to the learning settings in which they teach. We expect sessions to be thought-provoking and interactive, and in the end, to support higher levels of reading and writing achievement for upper elementary students.

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