



ELEMENTARY LITERACY TRAINING

Louisiana Tech University's (LaTech) elementary literacy faculty have crafted a course of study that strategically builds throughout the sequence and leverages local K-12 partnerships and field experiences to support their candidates in learning to teach elementary literacy.

The investment of time and thought has paid off – PRAXIS data from the Elementary Content Knowledge – English Language Arts test shows that, an average of almost 74%, LaTech's candidates score above the state and national averages.

Strategically built literacy blocks, over two consecutive quarters, support candidate development:

Literacy Block I is a content-rich dive into literacy development and growth:

- **EDCI 431 – Literacy Development Through Word Study:** Focuses on understanding how words work, particularly within the graphophonics cueing system. The course delves into the content and pedagogy of phonological awareness, print awareness, phonics, structural analysis, and the five stages of development word study (emergent, letter-name alphabetic, within word, syllables and affixes, and derivational relations).
- **EDCI 423 – Materials and Methods for Language Arts:** Focuses on writing composition and development of narrative, opinion, and informative writing. Candidates hone their own writing skills as well as best practices, including how to assess writing, for helping students develop as writers and authors.
- **EDCI 424 – Materials and Methods for Reading:** Focuses on the development of oral language and the five scientifically based reading instruction (SBRI) components – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The first elements connect to what candidates are learning in the word study course in order to see how these connect to overall reading process.

Literacy Block II provides a more thorough application of content, including the complex and varied reasons that some students struggle with reading.

- **EDCI 417 – Diagnostics and Correction of Reading Difficulties:** Focuses on the formal and informal assessment of struggling readers and possible remedial practices. Candidates learn to administer and interpret assessments around the five SBRI components and how to compile data in order to identify major strengths and weaknesses to initiate a plan of action. Candidates work one hour a week with a student who is struggling with reading, including meeting with the student 30 minutes prior to attending this course so they can administer an assessment and then immediately meet for class to discuss the assessment, possible interpretations, and plans. The course culminates with candidates presenting the classroom teacher with the students' assessment findings as well as intervention activities to use with the students.
- **EDCI 420R – Reading Practicum:** For 10 weeks, candidates are in classrooms for 1.5 hours daily, Monday-Friday to observe, assist, and teach. Two different placements, one in lower elementary classrooms (grades 1-2) and one in upper elementary classrooms (grade 4-5, for 1-5 certification (or placement K-1 and 2-3 classrooms for PH-3 certification) helps ensure candidates gain experience in the breadth of their certification band. A formal evaluation also occurs in each placement. All three literacy professors teach this course together in order to strengthen connections across the two literacy blocks, and faculty carefully spiral key instructional practices from Literacy Block I into the course topics to extend and reinforce learning.

Residency year and concurrent assessment coursework:

- Residency Year: Candidates are in K-12 classrooms full time for a full year, and literacy faculty remain in continuous contact with them to provide ongoing support.
- EDCI 418 – Methods and Materials for Instructional Assessment: This literacy-specific assessment course provides candidates with additional experience with how assessment can inform instruction. Each week, candidates learn an assessment practice and then have the opportunity to apply the practice in their residency classroom.

Strategically built relationships with the local K-12 schools extend and enrich the connected field experiences:

Many courses in both literacy blocks are taught at LaTech classrooms in local elementary schools near campus. This immersion ensures that candidates have ample high-quality opportunities to connect their learning to classroom applications and immediately see a practice in action. Structures field experiences in each block further extend their connections to practice. In Literacy Block I, for example, in a K-12 classroom, professors model lessons for key practices they teach in the methods courses. Candidates also observe classroom teachers modeling best practices with their students, complete video observations, and teach small groups of students.

Close collaboration of literacy faculty ensure alignment:

Literacy professors work cohesively and intentionally to ensure that each course works with and builds on others and that candidate learning progresses as desired. Prior to each new quarter, all literacy professors meet to reflect on the successes and areas for adjustment in the previous quarter coursework. This enables swift responsiveness to apply learning and improvements, which immediately benefit candidates' learning. The literacy team also holds informal weekly meetings to discuss content and candidate progress. Remaining Questions: Candidates in the first literacy block participate in three hours and 45 minutes of designated field hours each week in addition to the course contact hours. This enhances candidates' opportunities to apply their learning but also poses challenges to scheduling other courses. It is essential to map out candidates' coursework early on to minimize scheduling conflicts. The scheduling of formal observations in the second literacy block can also be challenging for professors, since the observations include pre- and post-conference in addition to the observation itself.

Carefully cultivating the close relationships with area schools and teachers that make the embedded field experiences successful is also a challenge. LaTech literacy faculty maintain a proactive presence in schools to help address potential concerns before they become an issue as well as to support clear communication with current mentors and recruitment of new mentors.

For more information:

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...THE MOST IMPORTANT THING WE DO IS TO HELP CANDIDATES GROW INTO THE BEST TEACHER THEY CAN BE SO THAT EVERY LIFE THEY TOUCH IN THE CLASSROOM FEELS THE IMPACT OF GOOD TEACHING.

– LATECH LITERACY FACULTY