

AUGSBURG COLLEGE
Education Department

Middle School Methods: Communication Arts/Literature - Writing
EED 331
(.5 credit)

Instructor: Maggie Knutson
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Course Prerequisites: PPST and admission to department

Course Description: This course will focus on writing strategies and processes appropriate to middle level students. Emphasis will include the writing process, the six traits of writing, writer's workshop and writing across the curriculum. The course is required for students seeking elementary licensure with a communication arts/literature specialty.

Education Department Mission Statement: The Augsburg College Education Department commits itself to developing future educational leaders who foster student learning and well-being by being knowledgeable in content, being competent in pedagogy, being ethical in practice, building relationships, embracing diversity, reflecting critically, and collaboration effectively.

A Message From the Instructor:

“Composition and literacy is the most dangerous kind of teaching
because you are dealing with ideas... yours and those of others.”
- Lee Galda, U of M Literacy Professor

Fellow Learners,

As we continue our studies in the instruction Language Arts, specifically the area of writing, know that we are asked to do an impossible job... impossible, but well worth the effort nonetheless. We alone will not create outstanding writers of our students, but we WILL contribute significantly to their mosaic as students pass through our classes yearning for our guidance, encouragement and inspiration. If we create a classroom environment that is SAFE enough to take risks, RICH enough to inspire genuine engagement and purpose, and SCAFFOLDED enough to nurture and grow our middle school students beyond the capabilities they had when they came to us, they will not stop short of moving us to tears.

This requires us to write with our students and share the joys and challenges that we experience. It requires us to constantly and critically reflect on our own practice and dare to improve it. It sometimes requires us to stand alone in a group of our colleagues, while engaging them in professional and respectful conversations about writing curriculum and

instruction for the benefit of all students. It requires the use of the heart and mind. It requires perspiration and tenacity. The instruction of writing requires courage. It is a difficult, and at times impossible job... and you will grow to love it.

I hope the course that I have designed provides you with experiences that will help prepare you to this end. The activities were chosen deliberately to get YOU thinking and acting as a teacher and a writer.

Subject Matter Standards linked to this course:

- 4. A. 1 The middle level teacher must understand the literacy needs of young adolescents encompassing the need to comprehend narrative and technical writing, the need to successfully access available databases, the need to write at an interactive level including a variety of personal formats, and the ability to interact on all the cognitive levels through writing.
- 4. A. 4 The middle level teacher must possess the ability to use authentic assessment practices for the evaluation of young adolescents' development in literacy skills.
- 4. A. 6 The middle level teacher must possess the strategies and skills necessary to develop the reading and writing behaviors of young adolescents across a breadth of content areas.

Additional Objectives linked to this course:

- 1. The middle level teacher must know how to engage middle level students in writing for a variety of academic and technical purposes, situations and audiences, including:
 - a. A technical procedure or set of directions
 - b. A personal narrative
 - c. An idea paper with supporting evidence
 - d. An opinion paper with supporting evidence (supports MN middle level preparatory standards)
- 2. The middle level teacher must know how to teach middle level students to use correct spelling and mechanics (supports MN middle level preparatory standards).
- 3. The middle level teacher must know how to teach writing to a range of students, including those with special learning needs and those for whom English is not a first language (MN SEP 3 Diverse Learners).

Required Text:

Spandel, Vicki (2000). *Creating Writers Through 6-Trait Writing Assessment and Instruction*. Pearson Education. New York, New York.

Graves, Donald (1994). *A Fresh Look at Writing*. Heinemann. Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

Six Traits materials will be provided the first day of class. They will be three hole punched and will be most effectively utilized in a three ring binder.

There is a 10 hour field experience required for this course. Please begin searching out a middle level English/Language Arts classroom where you can observe and/or participate in writing instruction. You will be required to keep a journal of your observations and thoughts pertaining to the classroom experience. If you have trouble finding a classroom, see me. I can hook you up.

Grades

Grades for this course will be based on the completion of the following assignments:

- 10% Writer's notebook
- 10% Reflection paper
- 10% Prewriting activities (2) from narrative writing
- 10% Personal narrative final draft
- 10% Two process drafts of narrative writing
- 10% Children's Picture Book Bibliography by Trait
- 10% Completion of and journal entries for 10 hours of grade 5-8 practicum experience
- 10% Attendance and Participation
- 20% Final Exam

Assignment Descriptions

Writer's Notebook: Students will keep writer's notebooks throughout the course. Students will be expected to make approximately 5 entries per week. An entry may be as brief as a paragraph or as lengthy as several pages, depending on the type of entry. Entries will be evaluated on volume, variety and thoughtfulness of writing (see the Randy Bomer chapter for more information).

Reflection Paper: Students will write one personal reflection paper on their professional identity, stemming from class discussion and prewriting. Students should identify the values they intend to demonstrate as a teacher and give some thought to why those values are held dear to them. This paper is intended to be 1-3 pages and typed.

Prewriting activities (2) from narrative writing: Students will explore at least two prewriting strategies by applying them as part of writing process for the personal narrative. These are not expected to be word-processed.

Personal Narrative: Students will turn in a final draft of the personal narrative worked on throughout the course. It should be approximately 3-5 pages, double-spaced and word-processed. This piece will be assessed by classmates using the six traits rubric for assessment practice and feedback only. All points will be awarded if the narrative is completed. This is more about the process than the product.

Two initial drafts of narrative writing: As part of the writing process activities for the narrative writing piece, students will bring rough drafts for their writing team (one copy per person) on two separate occasions (see course schedule for dates to have each draft

prepared). These drafts will be turned in with the final draft on the last day of class. For ease of reading for writing team members, these drafts should be double spaced and typed.

Children's Picture Book Bibliography by Trait: Students will explore children's picture books (some novels are okay, too) that can support six traits instruction. The bibliography should include at least two books for each trait. For each book, students should list the title, author, the trait that the book illustrates, a page number and excerpt from the book that exemplifies the trait or rationale for choosing the book for that trait. This bibliography should be typed.

Completion and journal entries for 10 hours of grade 5-8 practicum: These reflections can be in your writer's notebook as a separate section or in a separate notebook all together, it's up to you. Students will journal about their experiences watching or participating in literacy instruction in a middle school aged classroom (grades 5-8). Students should comment on the writing instruction they observe, the childrens' response to that instruction, middle school classroom management techniques (successful and/or unsuccessful), motivation techniques, teaching style, student behavior, writing assessment, etc.

Final Exam: The final exam will be brief and it will be open book. It will assess the extent of new learning and growth since the first day. Concepts covered will be six traits and the writing process.

Course Policies

Attendance: You are expected to attend class. Being absent will have an impact on your grade. Only emergency absences will be excused, and you may notify me of the emergency by phoning my home or work numbers on the front of the syllabus to notify me that you will be absent.

Participation: Think of the class as a learning community. Be prepared with all assignments and meet deadlines for individual and group work. Show up and share your ideas. Express your ideas and listen to others' ideas. Participation will influence your grade.

Late Assignments: Hand in your work on time. If unavoidable, it is okay to turn your work in late, but depending on the circumstances, late work may receive a reduced grade.

Special Needs: If you have any physical or learning needs, please discuss them with me as soon as possible. Also, please make use of the writing lab and the tutor center if needed. High quality work is expected of everyone and resources are available on campus to support that expectation.

Incompletes: Incompletes are granted only for extraordinary circumstances. The student must initiate the process of requesting and securing an incomplete. Forms are available at the

registrar's office. Students must work with the instructor to complete the form before the end of the term.