



## MIDDLE SCHOOL LITERACY: IMPROVING TEXT COMPREHENSION

### Course Description

*Middle School Literacy: Improving Text Comprehension*, an interactive, online and in-person professional development course, is designed for all middle school teachers, especially teachers of English Language Arts. The course is structured around strategies readers use before, during, and after reading to get meaning from text, and is designed to support students reading on or slightly below grade level. A special section, appearing in most topics, shows teachers how to customize instruction and reading strategies for the struggling reader, those students reading at least two years below grade level.

- The before-reading sessions explain how and why to build background knowledge and pre-teach new vocabulary and concepts. Specific techniques such as using a Smart Chart, previewing a book, mediating a textbook, using a Concept Definition Map, and teaching vocabulary context and root words to develop vocabulary are emphasized.
- The during-reading sessions, one each for fiction and nonfiction, explain how to explicitly model and teach key reading strategies, such as making inferences, asking questions, drawing conclusions, and using self-monitoring strategies.
- The after-reading session focuses on deepening students' comprehension by talking and writing in response to text. Guidance is given on note-taking—including double-entry journals—getting the most from group discussion, leading students through Thinking, Pairing and Sharing, and writing summaries.
- The classroom management session presents ways to manage classrooms for effective whole class, small group, and individual instruction that meet the needs of all students.

All online sessions are supported by lesson plans and classroom resources to ensure that the course content can be seamlessly integrated into classroom reading programs or subject-specific curriculum.

### Course Objectives

On completing this course, you will be able to:

- assess middle-school students for the purpose of matching them to texts and making strategic decisions about instruction.
- guide students at all reading levels to get meaning from text through building background knowledge, using targeted reading strategies, and applying content-related writing techniques.
- provide explicit strategy instruction to increase students' comprehension during the reading of fiction and nonfiction, including textbooks.
- enable students at all reading levels to understand content-related vocabulary.
- establish schedules and routines for working with students in small groups or individually, including solutions for struggling readers.
- implement lesson plans and resources that target the needs of middle school readers.

### Course Outline

**Course Introduction**  
Self-Assessment

- 1 Content Literacy in Middle School**
  - 1.1 Overview: Meet the Middle School Reader
  - 1.2 Four Middle School Readers
  - 1.3 The Cycle of Failure
  - 1.4 Conducting a Reading History
  
- 2 Assessing Your Middle School Students**
  - 2.1 Overview: The Goal of Assessment
  - 2.2 Warm-up: Who's Who?
  - 2.3 Using Data to Drive Instruction
  - 2.4 Oral Fluency Assessment
  - 2.5 Scoring an Oral Fluency Assessment
  - 2.6 Strategies for Building Fluency
  
- 3 Getting Meaning From Text**
  - 3.1 Overview: What Do Strategic Readers Do?
  - 3.2 Warm-up: Getting the Most From Text
  - 3.3 Matching Readers to Text
  - 3.4 Before, During, and After Reading
  - 3.5 The Unique Needs of Middle School Readers
  - 3.6 Creating a Literacy Environment
  
- 4 Before Reading Text: Building Knowledge and Language**
  - 4.1 Overview: Helping Readers Prepare
  - 4.2 Warm-up: Reading Without Background Knowledge
  - 4.3 Building Background Knowledge
  - 4.4 Creating a Smart Chart
  - 4.5 Previewing a Book
  - 4.6 Mediating a Textbook
  
- 5 Before Reading Text: Building a Stronger Vocabulary**
  - 5.1 Overview: Vocabulary Matters
  - 5.2 Warm-up: Knowing Words
  - 5.3 Which Words to Teach
  - 5.4 Mapping a Concept Definition
  - 5.5 Using Word Parts
  - 5.6 Using Context
  
- 6 During Reading: Engaging with Fiction**
  - 6.1 Overview: Strategies for Reading Fiction
  - 6.2 Warm-up: Appreciating Fiction
  - 6.3 Literary Elements: Character, Setting, Plot
  - 6.4 Genre and Literary Elements: Mood and Theme
  - 6.5 Making Inferences
  - 6.6 Self-Monitoring
  
- 7 During Reading: Engaging With Nonfiction**
  - 7.1 Overview: Strategies for Reading Nonfiction
  - 7.2 Warm-Up: Contrasting Fiction and Nonfiction
  - 7.3 Asking Questions
  - 7.4 Identifying Main Idea
  - 7.5 Analyzing Text Structure
  - 7.6 Drawing Conclusions
  
- 8 After Reading Text: Talking and Writing to Learn**
  - 8.1 Overview: Reading as Dialogue
  - 8.2 Warm-up: How Readers React
  - 8.3 Conducting Effective Discussions
  - 8.4 Note-taking
  - 8.5 Some Reading and Writing Pitfalls
  - 8.6 Thinking, Pairing, Sharing
  - 8.7 Writing a Summary

- 9. Managing Your Middle School Classroom**
- 9.1 Meeting All Students' Needs
- 9.2 Establishing Daily Schedules
- 9.3 Establishing Instructional Routines
- 9.4 Independent Practice
- 9.5 Motivation Matters