



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LEARNING DEVELOPMENT Rx for Discovery Writing Course Syllabus

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a lecture and laboratory course designed to train teachers to provide written language intervention in a group setting. Rx for Discovery Writing is specifically intended for students whose basic written expression skills are below expected standard as determined by a local educational agency.

Rx for Discovery Writing will build and strengthen grammar and writing mechanics, semantics, syntax, and composition writing skills with an emphasis on the writing process.

This intervention can happen within three 40-minute, weekly small group sessions or two 60-minute, weekly small group sessions. Students who need to master basic grammar and writing skills will most benefit from this program. Though handwriting and spelling skills are utilized and applied, these skills are not explicitly taught in this intervention.

Students will be challenged to apply their growing understanding of grammar to the creation of sentences, paragraphs, and compositions. Students will be implementing grammar, spelling and usage rules when editing their own written work as well as the written work of others.

Language and higher-level thinking skills will be developed and supported in this interactive, small-group intervention that covers research-based writing content while mediation, Socratic questioning, and the strengthening of cognitive functions will serve as the core methodology. In this dynamic intervention, students' written expression skills will be honed while their thinking and language skills will be strengthened, all within an atmosphere where writing skills are explicitly taught so anxiety and reluctance to write are reduced and thinking is maximized.

The following topics are discussed in the course:

- A. **Research** - Neuropsychology of Written Language Disorder; the power of mediation, cognitive functioning abilities related to written expression.
- B. **Philosophy** - Hands-on, brain-based, research-based grammar and writing activities with emphasis on Socratic questioning, theories of group dynamics and cognitive functions.
- C. **Intervention** - Balanced, mediated application of written language activities and techniques addressing:
 - 1. Grammar Skills
 - 2. Sentence construction and combination skills
 - 3. Composition and editing strategies
- D. **Assessment** - Identify specific difficulties with written expression, gather pre/post data using Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement and informal observations.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

- A. **GENERAL:** Successful completion of this course will enable the participant to better understand student needs in written expression based on the subtypes of written language disorders and understand how to strengthen grammar, writing mechanics, semantics, syntax and composition skills while also while learning how to utilize the group model for Rx for Discovery Writing to inspire reluctant and struggling writers to enjoy the writing process and the ability to communicate their own ideas in written form.
- B. **SPECIFIC:** Upon completion of this course, the participant will be able to:
 - 1. Acquire an understanding of the characteristics of students who struggle with written language disorders.
 - 2. Articulate how the components of written language; handwriting, spelling and composition of thought processes, are related.
 - 3. Design a writing intervention plan and implement techniques that meet the specific needs of a group of struggling writers for grades 4-12.
 - 4. Communicate and implement the theories of learning in a group setting.

III. COURSE RESOURCES

A. REQUIRED:

- 1. Rx for Discovery Writing Training Manual (digitally provided by NILD Canada).
- 2. *NILD Grammar Notebook* (to be purchased from *The Learning House*; www.learninghouse.ca)
- 3. *Easy Grammar Plus* Revised 2007 Teacher Edition by Wanda C. Phillips (to be purchased from *The Learning House*; www.learninghouse.ca)
- 4. [*Teaching Students with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, OWL LD, and Dyscalculia*](#) by Virginia Berninger & Beverly J. Wolf

B. OPTIONAL MATERIALS:

1. *Getting A Grip* by Kathleen R. Hopkins
2. [*Craft Lessons Second Edition: Teaching Writing K-8*](#) by Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi
3. [*Nonfiction Craft Lessons: Teaching Information Writing K-8*](#) by Ralph Fletcher and JoAnn Portalupi

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. PREREQUISITE: None

B. PRE-COURSE PREPARATION:

1. Read Chapters 1,2, and 5 from *Teaching Students with Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, OWL LD, and Dyscalculia* by Virginia Berninger & Beverly J. Wolf.
2. Familiarize yourself with *Easy Grammar Plus Revised 2007 Teacher Edition* by Wanda C. Phillips
3. Read the following articles found on the NILD Canada website (no need to print just read)
 - a. ["How Quality of Writing Instruction Impacts High-Risk Fourth Graders' Writing"](#) by Louisa Moats, Barbara Foorman and Patrick Taylor
 - b. ["Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools"](#) by Steve Graham and Dolores Perin
 - c. ["Writing to Read: Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading"](#) by Steve Graham and Dolores Perin
 - d. ["Handwriting is a Boeing 747 Technology"](#) by Kristin Barbour – NILD Executive Director
 - e. ["Why Writing by Hand Could Make You Smarter"](#) by William R. Klemm

C. COURSE ACTIVITIES:

1. Demonstrate Techniques taught with peers in a group setting.
2. Explain the differences between group and individualized models of instruction.
3. Read research on group effectiveness and discuss the social aspects of learning.

V. COURSE WORKLOAD

The time required for assignments has been estimated at five hours.

VI. COURSE EVALUATION

The instructor will observe group demonstrations and feedback will be given. Proficiency with the Blue Book will be noted during group demonstrations.

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