

*The “Literacy League” at Lewis-Clark State College:*

Dr. Jennifer Gardner - *Assistant Professor, Division of Teacher Education*

Christina Brando-Subis - *Literacy Instructor/Elementary Education Program Coordinator, Division of Teacher Education*

Dr. Julie Magelky - *Associate Professor of Literacy, Division of Teacher Education*

**The following is information on the Literacy courses in the BS Elementary Teacher Education program at Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston, Idaho:**

Our literacy courses are designed to help our students gain a rich understanding in research-based literacy instruction and assessment best practices through coursework and clinical experiences. All elementary education students take 2 core literacy courses. Both courses are focused on all literacy elements (reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing) focused within a specific grade band. The first, RE 340 – Foundational Literacy, focuses on grades K-2, and the second, RE 342 – Intermediate Literacy, focuses on grades 3-8. We designed the courses in a parallel structure to help students connect their learning across the courses. So, while the assignments are similar, they are each done once in grades K-2, and once in grades 3-8.

The following are a few key assignments/activities we’ve built into the courses that we feel are essential to our students’ learning, and hallmarks of great reading instruction:

- Students do 5 guided observations in their clinical experience in both courses. These focus on specific elements, such as text complexity, literacy classroom set-up, comprehension instruction, and word work. This helps them see how these literacy elements are implemented in real-world classrooms across grade levels.
- Students write a series of lesson plans that they teach in their clinical experiences. These can be small group or whole class and include topics like writing instruction and comprehension. This helps them practice developing and teaching engaging and rigorous lessons based on the standards and student needs.
- Students study the structure of Idaho state’s required literacy assessments and analyze the previous year’s results. This helps them understand the structure and outcomes of the state assessments, and how they can plan and modify instruction based on outcomes.
- Students select two focus students in each clinical experience. They administer 3-4 literacy assessments to the students, and then plan adaptations in their lesson plans based on the assessment results. This helps them connect assessment results to instruction.
- The Foundational Literacy course also has students correspond with second grade students in a pen-pal style extended writing activity. The students then analyze their pen-pal’s writing abilities. This helps them recognize different levels of writing development and connect it to instructional next steps.

We designed the courses in this manner to overcome a challenge we faced. Before these courses, we recognized our students were developing a solid understanding of specific elements of literacy assessment and instruction, but they lacked a cohesive picture of when and how to implement each element. Our goal in these courses was to help students not only learn the

specifics of each literacy element, but how the specifics worked together to help students' abilities move forward. Now, our students study all the literacy elements in relation to assessment and instruction, within a specific grade band. We have found this helps them recognize how literacy develops across grade levels, how assessment and instruction are related, and how they can adjust their instruction to meet the needs of every individual student within a class. Connecting their coursework to the clinical experiences has also been a huge success, as our students have been able to see the concepts we discuss in class used in real-world classrooms. They come back to our classes excited to share what they've seen and impressed that what they are learning is "real" and "true." We feel our students are gaining the understanding and experience necessary to teach literacy skills their very first day of teaching. It's a pleasure working with them.