Foundations of Literacy Micro-credential Overview

The National Reading Panel Report researched and identified five key areas for effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension. The Hill Center has developed micro-credentials to provide educators a chance to display their professional learning in the five pillars recognized in the report. Each micro-credential stack was developed using the Bloom's Taxonomy framework to allow educators to build their knowledge before analyzing, applying, and then evaluating their artifacts.

Phonological Awareness Stack

Phonological awareness is the understanding that speech is made up of individual speech elements (words, syllables, phonemes) and the ability to recognize and manipulate these elements. It is a foundational reading skill. The National Reading Panel identified phonemic awareness as one of the five pillars of successful reading instruction. The Phonological Awareness micro-credential stack provides educators with resources and research to build their knowledge in phonological awareness while narrowing in on the phonemic awareness level skills. Educators will then use assessments to determine student strengths and challenges to aid in designing a plan for instruction. Once strengths and weaknesses are determined, educators are asked to design a plan for instruction to teach or remediate specific skills using research-based methods. After designing a plan, educators will implement the plan with a student and reflect on the impact made on the student's acquisition of the identified phonological awareness skill.

Phonics Stack

Phonics is the system of relationships between letters and sounds in a language. The goal of phonics instruction is to help beginning readers understand how letters are linked to sounds (phonemes) to form letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns. These skills and strategies will help students learn how to apply this knowledge to decode unfamiliar words they encounter while reading. The Phonics micro-credential stack provides educators with resources and research to build their knowledge of best practices for phonics instruction including the use of systematic and explicit phonics instruction. Educators are then asked to assess a student's phonics skills to determine which syllable type(s) and decoding skills the student needs to map sound to print. With this knowledge, the educator will design a plan for instructing the student in the specific area of weakness identified through the assessment. Finally, the educator will implement the plan with a student and reflect on the effectiveness of the plan.

Fluency Stack

Fluency is the ability to read a text both accurately and quickly. Students must employ features of prosody when reading a text including reading with inflection, pausing at appropriate times, and using appropriate intonation and expression. Fluency is the bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Fluent readers can turn their attention to comprehending a text, which is ultimately the goal of reading. Building a foundation of knowledge of the research findings for fluency instruction as well as best practices for instruction is the first part of the Fluency micro-credential. Educators then will formally and informally assess fluency to determine areas of need for the student. With this knowledge, educators will then develop a plan to address the need using activities and best practices determined by research. Once the plan has been developed, the educator will implement the plan with a student to address his/her area of need in fluency.

Vocabulary Stack

Vocabulary refers to the words that we must know to communicate effectively. Vocabulary can never be fully mastered as we are always learning new words and building our lexicon. Vocabulary can be developed both indirectly through oral language and directly through explicit teaching. Educators will first review resources and research about the importance of explicit vocabulary instruction as well as ways to provide explicit instruction and word-learning strategies. Educators will then develop a plan related to teaching Tier II words from a text or a lesson on morphology. Once the plan has been created, the educator will use word-learning strategies to explicitly teach the vocabulary terms to the student and reflect on the student's level of word knowledge for the words taught during the lesson.

Comprehension Stack

Comprehension is the reason for reading. Good readers have a purpose for reading and engage in actively reading a text to make sense of it. Educators will learn about specific comprehension strategies that will help struggling readers improve their text comprehension. They then will select one of the comprehension strategies identified by the National Reading Panel to develop a plan for instruction based on a text. Once the plan is developed, educators will explicitly teach the students the strategy and use accompanying graphic organizers or planners to support the student's understanding of the text.