

# GRADUATE ENGLISH EDUCATION PROGRAM COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION

EFFECTIVE SPRING 2013

The comprehensive examination questions have been selected by the members of the graduate faculty to test your knowledge of information you have gained at the graduate level in English Education. The examination offers you the opportunity to express yourself in written form about topics of importance in English education.

The comprehensive examination will consist of three 30-minute questions and two one-hour questions. You will have four (4) hours to complete the examination. You will pace yourself and takes breaks as necessary.

You will not know the exact questions until the day of the exam. The questions will be selected from the following:

## ONE-HOUR QUESTIONS

1. Consider the various approaches to teaching writing. Demonstrate your understanding of these approaches by briefly: a) describing the philosophy behind the approach, (and authorities, when possible), b) describing the instructional techniques associated with the approach, and c) indicating strengths and weaknesses perceived by proponents and critics.
2. Identify what you consider to be a significant educational problem related to English Education—the teaching of writing, teaching of reading, teaching of literature, digital writing, teaching of media literacy (including the issue studied for your seminar paper or thesis, whether or not you have completed it yet). Describe a study you could conduct to investigate this problem. State the purpose of the study. Briefly discuss the problem from the standpoint of previous research. Next, state why your study is important. Finally, state the methods and procedures you would follow in implementing your study. You are encouraged to address a research topic you have been investigating as part of your graduate studies.
3. Compare and contrast 2 or 3 views explaining teaching of grammar offered by current research. Discuss the contrasting views. Include in your discussion the contributions of people such as Weaver, Anderson, Gallagher, Skinner, Noden, Noguchi, Hillocks, and other theoreticians in influencing or shaping these views. Note criticisms offered concerning each of these explanations of the teaching of grammar. Finally, suggest at least two classroom instructional applications, which could be recommended by adherents of each view.
4. Discuss how you would teach a child or a classroom of children to write and to become lifelong writers, including what you would do for struggling writers. In addition to a

discussion of the instruction you would use, describe the kind of room environment and affective support you would want to create where children were learning literacy through reading and writing. Cite published research where appropriate (e.g., Janet Allen, Nancie Atwell)

5. America's classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse with a significant number of students in public school classrooms children of minority backgrounds. How can we as teachers in our classrooms show an understanding and respect for cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity? Please indicate why such an understanding is important. Additionally, why should we incorporate diversity into English Education, and how can we do so? Include in your discussion a discussion of the role of multicultural literature.

### 30-MINUTE QUESTIONS

1. To demonstrate your knowledge of the history of English education, choose three of the following authorities in the field of teaching, English, or related areas. Explain their importance to the English profession and cite at least one example of their specific contributions or works.

James Britton  
Peter Elbow  
Jeffrey Wilhelm  
Jean Piaget  
Lev Vygotsky  
Kelly Gallagher  
Judith Langer  
Lucy Calkins  
Alfie Kohn

James Gray  
Carol Booth Olsen  
Jim Burke  
James Moffett  
Peter Smagorinsky  
Charles Bazerman  
Arthur Applebee  
Katie Wood Ray  
Douglas Barnes

Donald Murray  
Donald Graves  
George Hillocks  
Linda Flower  
Jim Hayes  
Nancie Atwell  
Richard Beach  
Jane Zeni  
Thomas Newkirk

2. As a teacher who is a reflective decision-maker, you have had opportunities within the Graduate English Education program to reflect upon your ever-evolving teaching philosophy. Please discuss your current philosophy of teaching English Language Arts. Provide specific examples for how you have grown as a reader, writer, teacher, and learner as a result of your deeper level of understanding of the reading and writing process, citing published research that has influenced you as appropriate. Also discuss also how you plan to continue learning and growing after you graduate from the Graduate English Education Program.
3. *Writing Next* outlines 11 effective strategies for the teaching of writing. Discuss how teachers can help strengthen writing skills. Include in your discussion major writing strategies that can help students' writing skills, indicating how and why each helps. Please do *not* provide step-by-step procedures for using the strategies.

4. Assume you have accepted a position as an English teacher in a nearby school district. Explain the plans you hope to implement. Include in your discussion your plans for assessment, instruction, and delivery systems. Provide a research-based rationale for these plans.
5. Explain how teachers can help accommodate students' individual differences, varying reading and writing levels, and learning styles through differentiating assignments. Additionally, discuss major means and strategies through which teachers can help students become independent learners through individualization and grouping appropriate to a particular grade level you identify.
6. The importance of freewriting has been stressed traditionally by many authorities. Currently informational and argumentative writing are being emphasized in schools. Freewriting may be minimized in the quest for improve argumentative or informational writing. Describe the importance and function of freewriting in the writing process and how to implement in a writing or literature classroom. Cite Blau, Elbow, Tierney, or others
7. Assessment plays an important role in writing and literature instruction. Describe the role it plays and explain the different uses for assessment. Discuss different types of formal and informal writing or literature assessments, focusing on strengths and weaknesses of formal and informal assessment, and noting when each would be appropriate and inappropriate.
8. Technology is increasingly available for use with literacy instruction. Discuss how technology can be used in teaching literacy, including reading, writing, and literature instruction. Also, discuss some of the cautions needed to be certain that technology is serving teachers and children in improving literacy rather than being used as busywork.
9. If you participated in the Ozarks Writing Project Summer Invitational Institute, name three experiences that affected your teaching, thinking, and writing. Cite appropriate published research.
10. Many researchers have emphasized the importance of reading and writing being taught in conjunction. In a literature-based course, how will you embed writing and writing instruction? Cite the published research.
11. You notice an ongoing obstacle for your students. Describe how you would engage in a teacher inquiry project to engage the issue. Include your initial collection, the data you might collect, how you would examine or analyze it, and what you would hope to understand through the research design. Cite the published research on teacher inquiry, teacher research, action research, or qualitative research. (Zeni, MacLean and Mohr, Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein, Cochran-Smith, and Lytle)
12. Similar to other disciplines, practitioners in the field of English Education continue to note and consider educational trends and areas of research, which if assimilated into their existing teaching practices can aid in improving the quality of teaching and learning in their classrooms. Below are examples of trends and areas of research currently impacting the field of English Education. Demonstrate your understanding of one or two of these areas,

explaining the theoretical and instructional implications of these trends citing authorities where possible.

Reading and Writing Workshop  
Common Core State Standards  
Brain-based research  
English as a second language  
Gifted Education  
Cooperative Learning  
Collaborative Learning  
Learning styles  
Literature circles  
Literature discussion groups  
Multiple intelligences  
Multi-genre research and writing  
Digital Writing/Composition  
Digital Literacy  
The teaching of writing online  
Oral language and its relationship to writing  
Flipped Classrooms  
Blended Classrooms  
Teacher study groups  
Teaching nonfiction writing  
Title I