
M.ED. PORTFOLIO PACKET

WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY OF PA

WCU M.Ed. in Reading
Literacy Master’s Portfolio Guide
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Literacy Master's Portfolio Overview

As part of your work in the M.Ed. in Reading program, you will complete a portfolio. The development of a portfolio is a companion experience integrating your learning and university-based experiences. The portfolio is designed to document and demonstrate your learning throughout the academic program. In addition, this assignment will serve as our program assessment for 2017 ILA **Foundational Knowledge** standard elements (components 1.1, 1.2, 1.3) for specialized literacy professionals. Standards can be found at: <http://literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/resource-documents/draft-ila-standards-2017.pdf>)

Theoretical Foundations in the WCU M.Ed. in Reading Program

In order to make wise pedagogical choices and to lead with focus and vision, it is important to ground your instructional practice in the theoretical ideas and accompanying research that shape the field. Our program faculty embody and reflect four major theoretical perspectives out of which most literacy theory, research, and teaching practice extend. A theoretical perspective is “the umbrella category into which similar theories fall,” (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 12). As such, you will encounter these four theoretical perspectives (the Constructivist and Social Constructivist Perspective; the Developmental Perspective; the Cognitive-Processing Perspective; the Socio-Cultural and Critical Literacy Perspective) across your M.Ed. courses.

In addition, you will learn about individual theories related to literacy and learning that fall under and across the four theoretical perspectives named above. We will utilize the following definitions to understand individual theories:

- “Theories are explanations grounded in belief systems usually supported by extensive research and databases, and often held by large groups of people,” (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p. 3)
- A theory is “...a well-documented explanation for a phenomenon related to teaching and/or learning,” (Tracey & Morrow, 2012, p.4)

One of the goals of this portfolio is to provide a space in which you can demonstrate the development of theoretical knowledge from across the majority of the courses in the program. Specifically, the portfolio will provide you an opportunity to share the theories and beliefs about teaching and learning that shape your practice. It will be important for you to develop a system by which you can keep track of and organize the theoretical perspectives and theories about which you have learned in the program (See sample chart for one idea of how to do so).

The Portfolio Development Process:

The portfolio process will be completed throughout your time in the M. Ed. Program (See Portfolio Contract). You are responsible for:

1. Collecting and selecting assignments from your courses for use as artifacts in your portfolio
2. Creating new works (2 category reflections and 1 position statement) to include in your portfolio
3. Attending a portfolio peer review workshop and giving/receiving feedback with peers regarding the drafts of new works for the portfolio

4. Submitting your portfolio for evaluation in a timely manner and in accordance with the M.Ed. in Reading Theoretical Foundations Portfolio Policy, as described in the Graduate Catalog from your academic year of entry into the program.

The portfolio process will consist of three distinct phases:

Phase 1: Artifact Collection

- You will collect potential artifacts from your courses to include in your portfolio. Faculty members may suggest assignments from their courses that might make for ideal portfolio artifacts. However, you may select any course assignment providing it meets the criteria for inclusion (See Portfolio Contract in Appendix A). You should plan to save and store your own artifacts until you reach Phase 3.

Phase 2: Artifact Selection and Written Reflections

- You will select your 4-5 artifacts and write a reflection for each category (1) the evolution of your literacy philosophy and your literacy teaching practice; (2) and the development of your commitment to social justice and/or critical pedagogy that fosters student agency and draws on their funds of knowledge. You will be provided a list of reflection questions to consider that you may use to prepare your reflections (See Appendix C).

Phase 3: Developing a Position Statement

- You are eligible to begin phase 3 of the portfolio after completing the following courses: EDR 505, EDR 507, EDR 509, EDR 516, EDR 519, and either EDR 512 or EDR 532.
- You will select a literacy topic to respond to and compose a position statement. You will develop a thesis statement that succinctly summarizes your position on the chosen topic and then defend your position by utilizing your knowledge of at least two theoretical perspectives including specific theories and research studies. You will explain how you might implement your vision in your school or district utilizing your knowledge of classroom literacy practice and your artifacts (where appropriate). This essay should be 8-10 pages (12 point font, double spaced, 1 inch margins).

Phase 4: Portfolio Finalization

- You will attend a portfolio peer review workshop facilitated by the graduate coordinator. At this workshop, we recommend that you have the following items: your artifacts, a draft of each category reflection, and a draft/outline of your position statement. The more prepared you are, the more you will benefit from this workshop.
- Based on peer feedback, you will revise your portfolio.
- You will submit your final portfolio for evaluation by a team of faculty members. Portfolios must be submitted for evaluation prior to your final semester in the program. Portfolio submissions are due at the end of the first week of February and the end of the first week of October. Request for approval of your portfolio submission must be made in writing to the graduate coordinator by December 1 for the February submission date and by July 1 for the October submission date.
- If the portfolio does not meet the criteria for passing, you will have one semester to revise, address the criteria, and resubmit. Portfolio resubmissions are due at the end of the first week of February or the end of the first week of October.

Literacy Master's Portfolio Category Reflection Assignment Description

After selecting 4-5 artifacts created throughout the courses in your M.Ed. program, you will need to write 2 reflection statements (one per category) explaining your development in the following categories:

1. How have your literacy philosophy (beliefs about teaching and learning) and your literacy teaching practice evolved during your time in the M.Ed. program?
2. How has your commitment to social justice and/or critical pedagogy that fosters students' agency and draws on their funds of knowledge developed during your time in the M.Ed. program?

For each reflection, discuss how your thinking and practice has evolved in the given category in relation to what you have learned in your M.Ed. courses. In each reflection, discuss how the selected artifact(s) are evidence of the development of your literacy philosophy and practice and/or the development of your commitment to social justice and critical pedagogy. Each artifact does not need to be discussed in each reflection; however, each reflection should reference at least two artifacts included in the portfolio and all artifacts must be referenced in at least one reflection paper. In addition to discussing changes in each category, artifacts should be meaningfully integrated into the reflection. You should use your artifacts to articulate key points in your development or major themes in your reflection. Be sure to include citations from course readings to support your ideas. Each reflection should be approximately 3-4 pages (12 point font, double spaced, 1 inch margins).

Position Statement Assignment Description

Assignment Introduction

You will select a topic from the choices below and write a position statement synthesizing your learning from your M.Ed. coursework to support your thesis. To synthesize means to combine individual parts into a new whole. For this assignment, the individual parts from which you will need to draw are: (a.) the artifacts you have selected for inclusion in your portfolio (where appropriate), (b.) the theoretical knowledge that you have developed over the course of your program thus far, (c.) your classroom practice and field experience with readers and writers, and (d.) your understanding of the historical and evidence-based foundations of reading, writing, speaking, and listening development in order to develop a voice in the profession to advocate for best practice.

The new “whole” that you will create is this essay, in which you will use the above parts to defend your response to one of the following topics. Your essay should be 8-10 pages (12 point font, double spaced, 1 inch margins). The purpose of this essay is to evaluate the development of your theoretical knowledge for literacy instruction, as applied to a real-world issue, in a manner that is both authentic and interesting. You do not have enough space to be comprehensive, instead, you must write in a manner that is well-organized, clear, and focused.

Topic 1:

One of the most pressing and ongoing challenges for literacy teaching in your district is a pervasive deficit stance towards students who experience challenges with reading and writing. The school board has invited speakers on the issue. Develop a statement on how your district can position students within an asset-based framework (e.g. curriculum, grouping, class composition, classroom discourse, philosophy). In the first 4-5 sentences, briefly describe how this issue is playing out in your district. In the remainder of your statement, explain how shifting to an asset-based perspective would enhance literacy teaching and learning for all students. Be sure to discuss *content integration* (incorporating content about African Americans, Mexican Americans, etc. in the curriculum); the *knowledge construction process* (how you support students’ understanding and build on the frames of reference they bring); *equity pedagogy* (how you modify your methods and the range of strategies and teaching techniques you use to enable kids from diverse backgrounds to learn); teaching to *reduce prejudice* in students; and creating an *empowering school culture and social structure*.

Topic 2:

One important role of a reading specialist is to inform others about and advocate for high quality literacy instruction for all students. You are interviewing for a reading specialist position at a school that is looking to improve their current instructional model for teaching literacy and you have been asked to share your ideas for improving the existing model. Based on your knowledge of theoretical models and research, please explain your vision for a school-wide approach to high-quality literacy instruction for grades preK-6 or 6-12. Be sure to address all components of literacy: vocabulary, comprehension, writing, and orthographic knowledge (including spelling). Address the importance of motivation, engagement, culturally relevant materials and pedagogy, and using assessment to inform instruction.

Writing your Position Statement:

Select one of the above topics and develop a thesis statement that succinctly summarizes your position on the chosen topic. Defend your position by utilizing your knowledge of at least two theoretical perspectives including specific theories and research studies. Keep in mind that your response will be evaluated on how well you utilize this knowledge to support your position. Explain how you might implement your vision in your school or district utilizing your knowledge of classroom literacy practice and your artifacts (where appropriate). Be sure to make clear connections between the literacy practices discussed and the vision and underlying theoretical perspectives and theories that comprise your thesis.

Appendix A: Literacy Master's Portfolio Contract

My signature on this page indicates that I understand my responsibilities and obligations in relation to the Portfolio Requirement of the M.Ed. in Reading Program:

- I have read the Portfolio Policy in the graduate catalogue published during my year of entry into the program.
- I am aware that I must access the assignment description and related documents on the Literacy Department's website and that I may address any questions related to the requirements and/or timeline and logistics to the current Literacy Department Assessment Coordinator and/or Graduate Coordinator. I recognize that the assignment description and related documents on the department's website contain information and details that are not reflected in this contract.
- I understand that it is recommended that I develop a system to keep track of and organize the theoretical perspectives and theories about which I have learned in the program.
- I understand that I need to purchase and read *Lenses of Reading: An Introduction to Theories and Models* (Tracey & Morrow, 2017) and that sections of this text will be used in some courses across the program.
- Because artifacts should come from different courses at different points in my program, I understand that it is in my best interest to save and store all work completed in my courses at least until artifacts are selected for final inclusion in the portfolio. It is solely my responsibility to save and store my work in the M.Ed. Program. In the event that I lose my work, it is my responsibility to locate, recreate, and/or utilize the work that I do have. I recognize that this may impact my ability to successfully complete this requirement of the program.
- All artifacts should be my or my group's original coursework. If I choose to submit an artifact that was completed as part of a group, I must be prepared to explain how the artifact directed my individual evolution as a learner/reading professional.
- I recognize that the portfolio reflection statements and position statement are not completed in the confines of any particular course and that I must allocate my own time to complete these portions of the portfolio.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to attend a portfolio review session prior to the submission of my final portfolio. I recognize that this is the only structured opportunity to receive feedback on my work. I understand that the better prepared I am, the more productive this review session will be.
- I understand that I am not permitted to solicit feedback regarding the portfolio reflection statements and position statement from any faculty member prior to submitting my portfolio for evaluation.
- The signed contract must be returned to the Literacy Office (Krista Carstens, department secretary) within one month of receiving your acceptance letter.

Student's Signature

Graduate Coordinator's Signature

Appendix B: Literacy Master's Portfolio Checklist

- I. Artifacts:**
My portfolio contains 4-5 artifacts/products from the courses in my M.Ed. program.
- II. Category Reflections:**
My portfolio contains 2 category reflection papers, 3-4 pgs each (12 point-font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins).
- One category reflection paper discusses the evolution of my literacy philosophy and my literacy teaching practice.
- The other category reflection paper discusses the development of my commitment to social justice and/or critical pedagogy that fosters students' agency and draws on their funds of knowledge.
- In each reflection, I have discussed how the selected artifact(s) are evidence of the development of my literacy philosophy and practice and/or the development of my commitment to social justice and critical pedagogy.
- III. Position Statement:**
My portfolio includes a position statement that is 8-10 pages (12-point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins) where I argue my position in response to a provided literacy topic.
- In my position statement, I have synthesized what I have learned throughout the program to support my position with theoretical, historical, and evidence-based foundations of reading, writing, language, speaking, and listening development.

Appendix C: Literacy Master's Reflection Questions

Below are some questions you might consider when writing each reflection. You do not need to address every question below. These are options to help structure your thinking and get you started writing in an organized fashion. Your reflection should demonstrate a commitment to thinking in a deep and meaningful manner both as an adult learner and a reading specialist candidate. Your reflection should include an introduction, a conclusion, and be written in a manner that is clear, complete, and error-free.

General questions to consider when reflecting:

- What?: Describe the ideas, the artifacts, or the learning that you have done in this area.
- So what?: What is the significance of the ideas, the artifact, or the learning for you as a teacher or a reading specialist candidate?
- Now what?: How does this idea, artifact or learning change what you believe or do? What new questions do you have? What new goals does this lead you to set?

1) Questions to consider when reflecting on the evolution of your literacy philosophy and your literacy teaching practice:

- How has your literacy philosophy and literacy teaching practice evolved?
 - What research, theories, theorists, and/or theoretical perspectives have influenced you to change your literacy philosophy and/or literacy teaching practice?
 - How does the selected artifact(s) show evidence of the evolution of your literacy philosophy and/or literacy teaching practice?
 - What key moments or critical incidents led you to change your literacy philosophy and/or literacy teaching practice?

2) Questions to consider when reflecting on the development of your commitment to social justice and/or critical pedagogy that fosters students' agency and capitalizes on their funds of knowledge:

- How has your commitment to social justice and critical pedagogy developed while enrolled in the M.Ed. program?
 - Why and/or how have you changed your teaching practice to reflect this commitment?
 - What has influenced this development?
 - How does the selected artifact(s) show evidence of development of your commitment to social justice and critical pedagogy?
 - What key moments or critical incidents have led you to see things differently?
 - When have you had the chance to see texts, others, or the world through perspectives other than your own? What have you learned from that experience?

Appendix D: Sample Theory Chart

Theoretical Perspective	Theory	1 or 2 Key Theorist(s)	1-3 sentences explaining the key concepts or cornerstones	2-4 classroom applications/ activities

