

Strengthening Writing – The Writing Rope

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Licensure Renewal Credit: 1 credit

This course is offered by MISIC and is approved for licensure renewal credit only upon successful completion of all the components. The course is not approved as credit toward an endorsement or new teaching authority. Transcripts and credit will be issued by MISIC.

This course is presented in a self-paced format. Participants, whether individually or as learning team, are expected to make reasonable progress through the components. In order to accommodate the participant's work schedule and professional setting, no due dates are attached to the individual components with the exception of the final due date.

Dates: July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Course Description (Overview of Course)

Writing is one of the most complex skills students are asked to master, requiring the simultaneous coordination of multiple cognitive processes. To make this process more manageable, this course of micro-credentials utilizes Joan Sedita's Writing Rope as an instructional framework. Much like Scarborough's Reading Rope clarifies the components of reading, the Writing Rope illustrates how proficient writing is "woven" together from several distinct strands of skill and knowledge.

Each micro-credential in this series focuses on a specific strand of the rope, offering a deep dive into the evidence-based practices essential for student success. By exploring these fundamental components, educators will acquire a toolkit of practical strategies, ultimately helping students become more fluent and impactful writers.

This course provides choice to the participants. Six micro-credentials address different facets of strengthening writing, from critical thinking to text structure, to transcription. Consider your experience and needs regarding writing instruction and choose what is best for you. **Participants will complete any two of the six micro-credentials to fulfill the requirements of this course.**

School Improvement Rationale (School data that indicates a need for this course)

While significant strides have been made in developing foundational reading skills, literacy does not end there. Writing is often the "neglected R," yet it is a primary lever for demonstrating knowledge across all subject areas. However, writing instruction frequently remains fragmented, assigning students "what" to write but not explicitly teaching them "how" to construct it. Understanding each component of skilled writing and the cognitive demands required to produce it, is essential to developing strong literacy skills.

Research indicates that reading and writing are reciprocal; strengthening a student's ability to compose text directly enhances their ability to comprehend it. This course ensures writing instruction is as evidence-based and systematic as reading instruction.

In addition, the micro-credential format requires teachers to apply evidence-based strategies directly to their current student work. This "bridge to practice" ensures that the learning translates immediately into classroom results. Teachers will apply learned strategies with their students and reflect on the data as evidence of instructional growth.

Expected Outcomes: The learner will be able to...

Those who complete **all** components of the course will be able to:

- Model the pre-writing stage of the writing process using think-alouds and/or write-alouds to demonstrate the critical thinking behind idea generation and the organization of ideas.
- Explain the difference between revision and editing during the writing process.
- Allocate specific classroom time for revising and editing rather than just drafting.
- Select mentor texts that illustrate examples of the writer’s craft: strong word choice, voice, and literary technique or devices.
- Explicitly teach the techniques of the writer’s craft and model how they are used in writing.
- Recognize transition words or phrases that signal a pattern of organization and identify graphic organizers that can be used to help reduce a student’s cognitive load during writing.
- Explicitly teach the patterns of organization and model how they are used in writing.
- Explicitly teach syntactic awareness and elements of sentence structure.
- Analyze how the decisions a writer makes about the syntax of a sentence during the writing process influences a reader’s understanding of the text.
- Define transcription in the writing process and describe its subskills.
- Analyze a student’s strengths and weaknesses in transcription skills and suggest scaffolds to reduce the cognitive load required to transcribe.
- Evaluate current spelling and handwriting curriculum and recommend adjustments for effective instruction.

Note: Success criteria for each component are identified below.

| Micro-Credential Component* | Micro-Credential Description | Hours |
|--|---|-----------|
| Strengthening Writing with Critical Thinking: Focus on Pre-Writing | Critical thinking in writing involves generating ideas, gathering and organizing information, synthesizing information from multiple sources, and summarizing complex ideas. Critical thinking drives the writing process, and ultimately, the writing process acts as a recursive, structural framework that encourages a “thinking” approach. During the pre-writing phase, students activate the Critical Thinking strand by determining their specific purpose and audience, which then dictates the organizational patterns they will use to structure their thoughts, all before a single sentence is written. When we strengthen the critical thinking strand, students become thinkers who write. This micro-credential will focus on the critical thinking strand of Joan Sedita’s Writing Rope, specifically the critical thinking required during Pre-Writing: generating ideas, gathering information, and organizing thoughts. | 7.5 Hours |

Success Criteria for this micro-credential:

- Task I - Pre-Writing Lesson Plan and Artifacts
 - A one or two-day lesson plan teaching "Idea Generation" and "Organization" needed for the prewriting stage.
 - A “script” for the Think-Aloud/Write-Aloud portion included within your lesson plan.
 - Copies or photos of the two completed pre-writing activities modeled by the teacher for the students. (idea generation and organization of ideas)

- A copy of at least one student’s idea generation and organizational plan that shows a clear structure for assigned writing.
- Task II - Idea Generation and Organizational Tools for Pre-Writing
 - Submit 3-5 examples of idea generation strategies, graphic organizers, or organizational tools your students could use during the prewriting stage for another content area and/or future writing tasks.
 - A brief statement describing each strategy or tool and how it would be used to support student “thinking” during pre-writing.

| Micro-Credential Component* | Micro-Credential Description | Hours |
|---|--|-----------|
| Strengthening Writing with Critical Thinking: Focus on Revising & Editing | By focusing on "Critical Thinking" during the revision phase, students engage in the high-level cognitive work of evaluating their organizational patterns and the logical flow of their ideas. This deliberate exercise results in enhancing the reader's understanding. This micro-credential will focus on the critical thinking strand of Joan Sedita’s Writing Rope, specifically applying critical thinking skills to make decisions about Revision (adding, deleting, moving, or changing ideas) and proofreading for conventions (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar.) | 7.5 hours |

Success Criteria for this micro-credential:

- Task I: Revising Writing
 - A one or two-day lesson plan teaching revision. (The lesson plan should include all items described in the task above)
 - A “script” for the Think-Aloud/Write-Aloud portion included within your lesson plan.
 - Submit a copy of the revisions made to the rough draft when modeled for students
 - Submit a copy of one student’s revising that clearly shows the use of revision strategies to improve the writing.
- Task II: Editing Writing
 - A one or two-day lesson plan teaching editing. (The lesson plan should include all items described in the task above)
 - A “script” for the Think-Aloud/Write-Aloud portion included within your lesson plan.
 - Submit a copy of the editing the teacher made to the rough draft when modeled for students.
 - Submit a copy of one student’s editing that clearly shows the use of editing strategies to improve the writing conventions.
- Task III - Revising and Editing Strategies & Tools
 - Submit 3-5 strategies or tools your students could use during revising or editing.
 - Write a brief statement describing each strategy or tool and how it would support student “thinking” and reduce the cognitive load during the revision stage of the writing process.



| Micro-Credential Component* | Micro-Credential Description | Hours |
|--|---|-----------|
| Strengthening Writing: Developing the Writing Craft | Writer’s Craft refers to the purposeful techniques a writer uses to engage and influence their audience. According to Sedita, this strand encompasses several key elements: word choice and voice, literary devices, and awareness of audience and purpose. When students master the craft of writing, it empowers them to be persuasive, empathetic, and creative. Students transition from "completing an assignment" to communicating ideas. This micro-credential will focus on the writer’s craft strand of Joan Sedita’s Writing Rope. Participants will apply instructional strategies to teach word choice and literary devices, specifically exploring how a writer’s awareness of audience and purpose can influence decisions. | 7.5 hours |

Success Criteria for this micro-credential:

- Task I. Mentor Texts Submit a document with seven to ten mentor texts for a variety of writer’s crafts. (Using the provided format)
- Task II - Designing “Writing Craft” Lessons
 - Submit two lesson plans: one word choice lesson and one literary device lesson. One lesson must use a mentor text from your curated list.
 - Lesson 1 - Word choice
 - Lesson Plan (follow the details outlined in the task)
 - A script of a think aloud/write aloud where appropriate within the lesson plan.
 - Submit a sample of student writing illustrating the use of effective word choice as taught in the lesson.
 - Lesson 2 - Literary Devices
 - Lesson Plan (follow the details outlined in the task)
 - A script of a think aloud/write aloud where appropriate within the lesson plan
 - Submit a sample of student writing highlighting the use of the literary device

| Micro-Credential Component* | Micro-Credential Description | Hours |
|--|--|-----------|
| Strengthening Writing: Understanding Patterns of Organization in Text Structure | Text Structure the "blueprint" of writing. It is the ability to organize thoughts logically and use specific frameworks to guide the reader through the information. According to Sedita, text structure is made up of three components: text types or genres, patterns of organization, and paragraph structure. This micro-credential dives into the text structure component of Patterns of Organization: description, sequence, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and problem/solution. Focusing on organizing ideas into logical structures acts as the bridge between isolated thoughts and a coherent message. | 7.5 hours |

Success Criteria for this micro-credential:

- Task I. Curate Mentor Texts
 - Submit the completed Mentor Text Organizer for a curated text set of 7-10 mentor texts.

- Task II - Deconstruct Patterns of Organization using Graphic Organizers
 - Submit copies of three different completed graphic organizers, with information from the mentor texts. Identify the mentor texts used for each graphic organizer.
- Task III - Explicitly Teach Patterns of Organization for Writing
 - Submit three samples of student work. Include:
 - a brief explanation of the writing task or constructed response assigned.
 - completed graphic organizers for each student.
 - written paragraph(s) that follow the pattern of organization for each student.

| Micro-Credential Component* | Micro-Credential Description | Hours |
|---|---|-----------|
| Strengthening Writing: Understanding Syntax | Syntax is the “how-to” of sentence construction. It involves understanding how words, phrases, and clauses work together in a sentence to create a clear meaning for the reader. For writers, this means having the ability to move beyond simple sentences to more complex, sophisticated sentence structures. Writers need a syntactic awareness – or an understanding of sentence grammar – to effectively translate their ideas into well-constructed sentences. The ability to craft strong sentences is the foundation of any well written text. This micro-credential will focus on Joan Sedita’s Writing Rope strand of syntax. Participants will apply instructional strategies to teach syntactic awareness and sentence writing skills necessary for strong, coherent writing. | 7.5 hours |

Success Criteria for this micro-credential:

- Task I - Curating Sentence Deconstruction Examples
 - A table of curated mentor sentences that can be used during lessons on syntactic awareness or syntax. (see example provided)
 - Select at least three sentence types appropriate for use as mentor models during instruction. (Use Sentence Types as a resource.)
 - Identify at least two examples for each type of sentence in texts used to teach content. Underline or highlight the sentence element to feature in a lesson and provide the source.
 - Explain how each mentor sentence can be used.
- Task II - Syntactic Awareness Lesson Plan
 - Develop and teach a lesson using one of the following syntactic awareness activities:
 - sentence scramble,
 - sentence combining, or
 - sentence elaboration.
 - Using a mentor sentence from the Sentence Deconstruction Resource created in Task I, guide students through the deconstruction of a mentor sentence to identify its structural "blueprint." Focus discussion on the sentence structure, punctuation, connecting words, and how the words work together to create meaning for the reader.
 - Incorporate scaffolds as needed to support student writing. (ie. sentence frames, sentence starters, graphic organizers, or question cards)

- Assign students a content area writing task to practice composing more complex sentences. Students may revise a previously written piece (sentences, paragraphs, or essay) or compose something new.
- The lesson plan submitted must:
 - Identify the intended grade
 - Describe the syntactic awareness activity selected
 - Use an explicit teaching model (“I do, We do, You do”)
 - Use a mentor sentence from the Sentence Deconstruction Resource
 - Assign a content area writing task for students to practice writing the sentence structure being taught.
- Submit three samples of student writing.

| Micro-Credential Component* | Micro-Credential Description | Hours |
|--|--|-----------|
| Strengthening Writing: Developing Transcription Skills | Transcription – comprising handwriting, spelling, and later keyboarding — serves as the essential strand that physically captures a writer’s ideas on the page. However, if a student hasn't mastered these foundational skills by the end of third grade, they hit a "writing bottleneck." Instead of focusing on communicating their ideas, their cognitive efforts are spent figuring out how to form a letter, spell a basic word, or even efficiently use a word processing program. When transcription skills are fluent, their mental energy is free to focus on the critical thinking needed to translate their thoughts into meaningful text. | 7.5 hours |

Success Criteria for this micro-credential:

- Choose **two tasks** to complete and submit the following:
- Task 1: Curriculum Review for Spelling and Handwriting (K-6) Evaluate your spelling and handwriting curriculum.
 - Completed Transcription Curriculum Review document.
 - Write a brief summary (1-2 paragraphs) of the overall strengths and weaknesses of the spelling and writing curriculum with regard to:
 - explicit instruction of each transcription component,
 - building accuracy and fluency
 - integrated application
 - Submit a document that describes one week of lessons. Include
 - the transcription skill(s) being taught (handwriting and/or spelling)
 - the instructional routine used (curriculum and/or instructional evidence)
 - alignment with the research for teaching transcription skills (high/low)
 - comments on how the lesson could be improved, if poorly aligned to research
- Task 2: Case Study & Transcription Plan (The Struggling Writer - Handwriting/Spelling)
 - Profile:
 - Name/Grade
 - Write a brief profile about a cold writing sample describing the context and transcription skills observed. Be specific about the types of errors made with spelling and/or handwriting.

- Writing Assessment: Submit copies of both completed assessments:
 - Alphabet Task or Copy Task.
 - Spelling Inventory Feature Analysis Chart to categorize the errors
- Transcription Plan: Design a 4-week intervention focusing on one specific transcription sub-skill (ie. explicit instruction in 'b/d' formation or letter formation and spacing (handwriting) or orthographic mapping of high-frequency words (spelling)
- Accommodation: Propose one scaffold or "temporary bridge" (ie. speech-to-text or a personal word bank) to allow the student to express his ideas while his transcription skills catch up.
- Task 3: Case Study & Transcription Plan (Struggling Writer - Keyboarding)
 - Profile:
 - Name/Grade
 - Write a brief profile about a typed writing sample describing the context and transcription skills observed. Be specific about the types of errors made with spelling and/or keyboarding while composing.
 - Keyboarding Assessment: Submit a copy of the completed Keyboarding Red Flag Checklist
 - Transcription Plan: Design a 4-week intervention focusing on one aspect of keyboarding from the red flag checklist. (ie. intensive keyboarding instruction (fluency), phonics instruction for multisyllable words (spelling), oral or written planning prior to typing (working memory/cognitive load).
 - Accommodation: Propose one scaffold or "temporary bridge" (ie. Speech-to-Text, graphic organizers, spelling and grammar checking tools) to allow the student to express his ideas while his keyboarding skills catch up.

Iowa Teaching Standards

Check which number(s) of the Iowa Teaching Standards that connect to the work defined in this course:

- ✓ Standard 1: Demonstrates ability to enhance academic performance and support for implementation of the school district's student achievement goals.
- ✓ Standard 2: Demonstrates competence in content knowledge appropriate to the teaching position
- ✓ Standard 3: Demonstrates competence in planning and preparing for instruction.
- Standard 4: Uses strategies to deliver instruction that meets the multiple learning needs of students.
- Standard 5: Uses a variety of methods to monitor student learning.
- Standard 6: Demonstrates competence in classroom management.
- ✓ Standard 7: Engages in professional growth
- Standard 8: Fulfills professional responsibilities established by the school district.

*A component can be completed as a stand-alone learning experience without the expectation of recertification credit or graduate credit. If the learner successfully completes all components in this course, they will be eligible to be awarded recertification or graduate credit.