

COURSE TITLE: THE BEST SCHOOLS

NO OF CREDITS: 2 QUARTER CREDITS
[Semester Cr Equivalent: 1.33]

WA CLOCK HRS: 20
OREGON PDUs 20
CEUs 2.0

INSTRUCTOR: MARY ANN JOHNSON, M.ED ADM.
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COMPLETION DATE: 3 months from your registration date.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: This course requires assignment responses to be posted in a password-secured ONLINE website hosted by The Heritage Institute.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

For over twenty years our educational pendulum has swung steadily toward an increasingly narrow focus on tests, standards and academic achievement and away from a focus based on human development that encourages and facilitates a student's growth as a fully rounded human being. In the book, *The Best Schools: How Human Development Research Should Inform Educational Practice*, is the argument for a return to instruction based on child development. To help teachers understand the dominant educational trend and its antidote, Armstrong describes the contrast between the philosophy of Academic Achievement and that of the Human Development philosophy. He considers that the practice of the Academic Achievement philosophy is based on faulty assumptions, and all too often results in negative consequences, and devastating effects on students. (The current federally-mandated NCLB legislation is seen as the exemplar of this approach at its worst.)

For the best match of instruction to the developmental stages of students, Armstrong supports an emphasis on play during early childhood learning; project-based and thematic learning for elementary students; active learning that acknowledges the emotional, social and intellectual development of middle school students; and more apprenticeships, mentoring, and real-world learning for high school students. In individual chapters devoted to each stage of student development, Armstrong gives practical suggestions and numerous examples of appropriate instructional practices. He contrasts those to the developmentally inappropriate practices used at the same stages by Academic Achievement programs. As an experienced realist as well as an advocate for change, Armstrong appeals for some kind of reconciliation between the two very divergent views of American education. For those teachers who are looking for a means to off-set the rigidity of NCLB mandates, this author has much to offer in both support and practical applications.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon completion of this course, participants will:

1. Have learned how to return balance to an educational system that is currently focused almost entirely on academic skills and standardized tests.
2. Have learned what constitute developmentally appropriate educational strategies for students across all school-age groups.
3. Have learned how to make a difference by using developmentally appropriate learning strategies.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Participants will complete assignments and post responses online to specific questions outlined for each assignment. Completion of all specified assignments is required for issuance of hours or credit. The Heritage Institute does not award partial credit.

HOURS EARNED:

Completing the basic assignments (*Section A. Information Acquisition*) for this course automatically earns participants their choice of 20 Washington State Clock Hours, 20 Oregon PDUs or 2 CEUs (Continuing Education Units), which translates to 20 hours. The Heritage Institute is an approved provider of

Washington State Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, and CEUs by IACET (International Association of Continuing Education and Training, an official national and international certifier of CEUs).

UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT INFORMATION:

• UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT OPTION 400 & 500 LEVEL

Teachers may opt to register for 2 (two) Antioch University, Seattle, 400 or 500 level quarter credits, instead of hours, and will be required to:

1. Complete all assignments for clock hours/CEUs (*Section A: Information Acquisition*)
2. Complete the extra reading/viewing, writing and classroom application assignments specified in the syllabus for the 400 or 500 level credit option (*Section B: Learning Application*)
3. Complete an Integration Paper by answering five (5) questions (*Section C: Integration Paper*)

• REQUIREMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

Antioch University Seattle requires 75% or better for credit at the 400 level (Upper Division) and 85% or better to issue credit at the 500 level (Post-Baccalaureate). These criteria refer both to the amount of work submitted as well as the quality of work as determined by each instructor

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| 1. Completion of Information Acquisition assignments | 30% |
| 2. Completion of Learning Application assignments | 40% |
| 3. Completion of Integration Paper assignment | 30% |

• CREDIT/NO CREDIT (No Letter Grades or Numeric Equivalent on Transcripts)

Antioch University Seattle Continuing Education Quarter credit is offered on a Credit/No Credit basis; neither letter grades nor numeric equivalents will show on a transcript. At the 400 level credit granted is equal to a "C" or better, and at the 500 level credit granted is equal to a "B" or better. This information is stated on the back of the transcript.

COURSE MATERIALS AND REQUIREMENTS:

1. Read the book, and complete the written responses as you go. (This book is estimated to take 6 clock hours to read.)
2. For the remaining 14 clock hours, complete the written responses to each of the 18 questions.

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

You will need to obtain the text *The Best Schools: How Human Development Research Should Inform Educational Practice*, written by Thomas Armstrong. This 182 page, 6" x 9" book (Stock #106044; ISBN-13: 978-1-4166-0457-0) is available from ASCD for \$18.95 (ASCD member) and \$23.95 (nonmember). Copyright©2006 by Thomas Armstrong. Available used at Amazon.com starting at \$1.

Order Information:

To order a copy, call ASCD at 1-800-933-2723 (in Virginia 1-703-578-9600) and press 2 for the Service Center. Or buy the book from ASCD's Online Store at www.ascd.org

BIBLIOGRAPHY AVAILABLE ONLINE:

For additional reading you may consider accessing an annotated Master Bibliography relative to this course that enhances any teacher's toolbox. The Bibliography can be downloaded as a PDF from the same course description page as the syllabus on www.hol.edu.

GETTING STARTED:

- Once you have registered for the course, you will be sent an email that contains the website address, password and course key that you need to access your online course, along with instructions on how to log into the online system.
- The assignments listed in this syllabus are also listed at the bottom of each online course document. Access each assignment and enter your responses online. It is suggested that you write your responses in a WORD document and then do a copy/paste function into the Responses box.
- When you have completed all assignments for the course, CLICK the 'ALL ASSIGNMENTS COMPLETED' option. The instructor will be notified that you have completed all assignments.

- The instructor will review your work and enter her responses online. You will be notified by email when the instructor has marked the course completed, and you will be instructed to log in and view the instructor comments. At that time, you can also SAVE a complete copy of the course assignments and responses.

NOTES TO ALL PARTICIPANTS:

- Unlike a live workshop, you are not required to be present (i.e. online) at specific days or times, participants will work at their own pace.
- All responses will be posted online. Large documents or files may be attached as part of your response by using the “Share A File” option.
- To maintain privacy, please do not refer to students in your paper by their actual names, but rather use an alias or designation such as “Student A.”

ASSIGNMENTS for CLOCK HRS/PDUs, CEUs, 400 or 500 LEVEL UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

A. INFORMATION ACQUISITION

ASSIGNMENT #1:

a) Briefly introduce yourself and tell why you have chosen this book (*The Best Schools*).

From the “Introduction:”

b) What implications from the “best colleges” controversy might apply to the use of standardized test scores to rank elementary, middle, and high schools across the country?

ASSIGNMENT #2:

The author makes observations about the term “developmental” and how it is currently used in educational discussions. Describe how he sees the word being used and how the term “developmentally appropriate practices” has come to be used.

ASSIGNMENT #3:

From “Chapter 1: Academic Achievement Discourse”

Answer **one (1)** of the following questions:

Of the eight assumptions that are used to support the superiority of Academic Achievement Discourse, which do you find the most credible? Which would appeal to parents?

OR

Of the twelve negative consequences of this philosophy that Armstrong presents, why do you think they are damaging to students?

ASSIGNMENT #4:

From “Chapter 2: Human Development Discourse”

Summarize the assumptions that support Human Development Discourse which are most powerful for you.

ASSIGNMENT #5:

The history of Academic Achievement Discourse consists largely of the development and administration of standardized tests and the impersonal political organization of educational goals. On the other hand, the history of Human Development Discourse is largely made up of individual thinkers and their personal theories, schools, and methods. What did the author give as positive consequences of Human Development Discourse?

ASSIGNMENT #6:

How have the differences in these two discourses played out in recent educational decision making?

ASSIGNMENT #7:

From “Chapter 3: Early Childhood Education Programs: Play”

When you think back to your own childhood play experiences, what kind of memories and feelings come to you? Do you think these play experiences have had any impact on your later life?

ASSIGNMENT #8:

Explain the author’s support of play as the focus of early education. What cultural forces may be working against this word in the education field? Are there cultural influences that may be working toward supporting the idea of play in early education?

ASSIGNMENT #9:**From “Chapter 4: Elementary Schools: Learning How the World Works”**

Think back to your own elementary school experiences and teachers who made a strong impression on you. Of the two approaches to education, Academic Achievement and Human Development, which do you think they preferred? What makes you think that?

ASSIGNMENT #10:

Explain the underlying messages, values and ideas that children receive about “how the world works” when they are taught using “scripted learning” vs. “inquiry-based instruction.”

ASSIGNMENT #11:

How has each of the two educational philosophies influenced preschool and kindergarten programs?

ASSIGNMENT #12:**From “Chapter 5: Middle Schools: Social, Emotional, and Meta-Cognitive Growth”**

From research we continue to learn about the physiologically-driven changes that occur during early adolescence. Explain the impact those changes have on the educational needs of this age group.

ASSIGNMENT #13:

In your opinion, which of the developmentally appropriate practices for young adolescents described in this chapter are most important? Which would be most appealing to parents? Why?

ASSIGNMENT #14:

If we ignore the developmental needs of middle schoolers, what can be the negative results for some of those students?

ASSIGNMENT #15:**From “Chapter 6: Preparing Students to Live Independently in the Real World”**

Of the several practices used in developmentally appropriate high schools, which one(s) would have appealed to you at that stage in your life? Would you have felt the choice of a career could have been assisted by a different high school program?

ASSIGNMENT #16:

If a traditional high school were converted into a series of “life-bridging” programs—career academies, internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, etc. – would the general socio-economic level of the community be an important factor in that decision? In the end, what benefits might result for the community, students, and faculty?

ASSIGNMENT #17:**From the “Conclusion” and “Appendix”**

Summarize Armstrong’s discussion of the impact of the two educational approaches on poor and minority students. Is his position realistic in the current political climate? Why or why not? Which of his comments strongly resonated with you? Why?

ASSIGNMENT #18:

Answer **one (1)** of the following questions:

How could you use the summary provided in the appendix to enable a discussion about benefits from implementing ideas from the Human Development Discourse in your school?

OR

How could this book help you achieve more balance in your use of age-appropriate teaching strategies?

This completes the assignments required for Washington Clock Hours, Oregon PDUs, or CEUs.

Continue to the next section for additional assignments required for University Quarter Credit

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED for 400 or 500 LEVEL UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

B. LEARNING APPLICATION

Courses taken for the credit option require that additional creative work be done beyond that completed for the Clock hour/PDU/CEU level. The extra work should show related reading or some learning application project beyond the reading and writing required for the clock hour option.

Work for the credit level must meet professional standards of quality. The assignment(s) chosen are expected to have substance and length appropriate to an additional investment of 10-20 hours of work.

ASSIGNMENT #19:

For 400 Level – Complete Part A only

For 500 Level – Complete part A and Part B

Part A: (400 and 500 Level)

Choose *one (1)* of the following assignments and post responses.

(1) Develop a plan to align some aspect of the course content into your own practice. At what grade level and subject will this new practice be focused? What reasons/beliefs in this book have prompted you to make a new practice or drop an old one? How and/or why have what they have done impacted your practice?

OR

(2) Reflect on the results of use of a strategy from this book, either one you have tried or hope to try. Start by describing the strategy you employed (or hope to employ) and analyze the outcomes (real or possible) with specifics.

OR

(3) Analyze what reservations you think a teacher, administrator, parent and/or student might have about using a strategy or issue advocated in this book. Describe how and why you think these might exist. Create a response which acknowledges the reservation and presents information you have found in this book or in additional reading you have done on this subject. (If you also have reservations, describe both sides of the issue.)

Part B: (500 Level ONLY)

This is IN ADDITION TO Part A (400 and 500 level) assignment above.

Choose *one (1)* of the following assignments and post responses.

(1) Based on your reading, create a presentation that could be given for a group of colleagues. This can be in the form of a Power Point, or a “lesson plan.” The presentation should include a copy of any handout(s) you will use.

OR

(2) Compare and contrast the material in this book with information you find in another book or online research of articles. For online research, quote any important URL, write a summary of information you found, and then compare/contrast with information in the book for this course.

OR

(3) Create an annotated bibliography of five or more books or articles related to the subject of this course. The annotation should include Title, Author, Publisher (or URL), length of the book or article and

your review of information contained. Add your opinion of the value or your criticism of the contents of each book or article, and rate the importance of the material in contrast to the subject of your course.

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS REQUIRED for 400 or 500 LEVEL UNIVERSITY QUARTER CREDIT

C. INTEGRATION PAPER

**ASSIGNMENT #20: Integration Paper
(Required for 400 and 500 Level Credit)**

Complete the requirements for university quarter credit by submitting a final Integration paper (2-3 pages). A heading is required; please use the following format.

Your Name:	Date:
Course Name:	Course Number:
# of Credits:	Level: (400 or 500)
Advisor Name:	

Respond to each of the 5 questions below. (First list the question and then write your answer)

1. What did you learn vs. what you expected to learn from this course?
2. What aspects of the course were most helpful and why?
3. What further knowledge and skills in this general area do you feel you need?
4. How, when and where will you use what you have learned?
5. How and with what other school or community members might you share what you learned?

INSTRUCTOR COMMENTS ON YOUR WORK:

Be sure to mark the “All Assignments Completed” section in the online course environment as this will notify the instructor that you have completed the course.

Upon receiving notification of your completion of all course assignments, your instructor will provide written comments online.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHING THIS COURSE:

Mary Ann Johnson, M.Ed. Adm. has worked with students of all levels, from alternative high school to gifted classes. She has also been a junior high vice principal and is now working with teachers for continuing education in classes, distance learning and building leadership groups.