

2025 NDKA Fall Conference
North Dakota Kindergarten Association

1 Semester Hour

ED 2000 - Valley City State University

October 4, 2025 - December 7, 2025

Amy Neal - Recorder of Credit

Course Description:

The North Dakota Kindergarten Association (NDKA) is bringing back our keynote speaker from 2024, Holly Ehle, to provide professional development for early childhood teachers. Holly has embedded relevant research into her presentations which support classroom instruction for the Science of Reading and Writing. Her focus this year is on writing/encoding and also giving attention to the top part of Scarborough's Rope to focus on language comprehension.

Participant Outcomes:

Through our face-to-face presentations from Holly Ehle, participants will gather ideas, activities, strategies, gain confidence and understanding of beginning writing skills and language comprehension from the Science of Reading.

Credit participants will have the opportunity to participate in a book study to deepen their knowledge of language comprehension. We will be using the book, "Strive for Five," by Tricia Zucker and Sonia Cabell as our resource. This book starts with understanding and defining the strands of Language Comprehension in Scarborough's Rope: Literacy Knowledge, Vocabulary, Verbal Reasoning, Background Knowledge, and Language Structure. Participants will learn strategies for these strands and put them into practice with classroom activities while pushing strategies into homes for parents. Through an on-line sharing platform, participants will post assignment reflections of their understanding and strategies they are using in the classroom

Course Requirements:

In order to participate in credit, participants...

- 1) must attend the Face-to-Face Conference in Bismarck, ND (7 hours)
- 2) must have FaceBook to join our private on-line platform to submit assignments and collaborate with the group.
- 3) must purchase their own copy of "Strive for Five," by Tricia Zucker and Sonia Cabell to use for the book study portion of the professional development. (8 hours)

Contact Hours:

(7 Hours) NDKA Conference Content

Date: October 4, 2025

Time: 8:00 - 3:30pm

Place: Sunrise Elementary School - Bismarck, North Dakota

Keynote Credentials: Holly Ehle, Assistant Professor of Education, Huntington University.

- *B.S. Elementary Education with a Kindergarten Endorsement, Purdue University, West Lafayette (1993).**
- *M.A. Elementary Education with a Reading Specialty, Indiana University (1999)**
- *Certifications in Early Education Leadership and Cognitive Neuroscience, Harvard University**
- *Ph.D Candidate; Reading, Language, and Literacy; Concordia University Chicago (ABD). Dissertation work focuses on the academic preparation of reading teachers in regard to implementing evidence-based, science of reading aligned instruction in the classroom.**

Morning (3.5 hours): “Using our phonics knowledge to write successfully.”

Afternoon (3.5 hours): “Building language and comprehension skills with early readers.”

(8 Hours) On-line Book Study Content and Outline

Participants must have FaceBook to join our on-line platform.

Text Resource: “Strive for Five,” by Tricia Zucker and Sonia Cabell

The 10 chapters in this book define and share strategies to enhance the 5 strands of language development with early readers. Chapter content will be assigned for reading and then reflected upon through our online platform. After reading the text and viewing the embedded videos, participants will respond to specific questions for reflection.

Participants will interact in weekly group discussion to share ideas and implementation of the ideas from the authors. Assignments will be posted according to the dates listed below to keep participants on a manageable timeline. All assignments listed below will be on the Facebook page for collecting responses.

Getting started with the text: “Strive for Five”

- 1) Turn to page (7) and read the Introduction (pgs. 7-12).
- 2) Check out the companion website with all videos and downloads. There is a QR Code on the inside of the front cover of the book
<https://www.scholastic.com/content/educators/en/pro/striveforfive.html>. The short videos throughout the book (QR Codes) are the same videos in the website above.

(2h) October 11, Part 1: Understanding and Implementing the Framework

Read pgs. 12 - 57

- 1) Read Chapter 1: What are the key components of a Strive-for-Five conversation, and how do they contribute to meaningful interactions between teachers and students?
- 2) Read Chapter 2: What evidence does the book provide to support the impact of structured conversations on students' reading comprehension and overall literacy skills?
- 3) Read Chapter 3: What strategies are recommended for integrating Strive-for-Five conversations into daily classroom routines? What do you already have embedded into your routine?

(1h) October 18, Chapter 4: Choosing Books that Spark Rich Conversations

- 1) Read pgs. 58 - 71
- 2) How can carefully chosen books enhance the quality and depth of classroom discussions?
- 3) Does your current curriculum have read aloud materials that follow the criteria of selecting good books for student read alouds?
- 4) Do you utilize the curriculum read alouds or do you choose your own books for classroom activities?

(1h) October 25, Chapter 5 - Go Nuts with Words! - Building Vocabulary with Conversations

- 1) Read pgs. 72 - 85
- 2) What are some effective techniques for using Strive-for-Five conversations to expand students' vocabulary?
- 3) Have you used any of these techniques in the past and already have them as part of your classroom conversations?

(1h) November 8, Chapter 6 - Verbal Reasoning with Conversations

- 1) Read pgs. 86 - 102
- 2) What specific strategies can teachers use to encourage and develop students' verbal reasoning through conversation?
- 3) Do you already use any of these strategies and give an example?

(1h) November 15, Chapter 7 - Conversations Build Knowledge

- 1) Read pgs. 103 - 117
- 2) How do Strive-for-Five conversations contribute to students' knowledge acquisition and retention?

(1h) November 22, Chapter 8 - Modeling Formal Language Structure

- 1) Read pgs. 118 - 127
- 2) What are some examples of how modeling formal language during conversations can benefit students' academic language proficiency?

(1h) November 29, Chapters 9 & 10 - Taking Conversations Beyond the Classroom

- 1) Read Chapter 9: What strategies can you share with parents to build conversations at home that would be beneficial to families but also attainable for you as the teachers.
- 2) Read Chapter 10: What is going to be your easiest strategy to implement from Strive-for-Five? What is going to be your most challenging strategy but you really want to implement it?

Evaluation Plan:

- 1) Participants will share 3 ideas they are taking back to their classrooms from the NDKA Conference on October 4th with Holly Ehle in Mandan, ND.
- 2) Participants will be reflecting and commenting weekly on questions in the 10 chapters from "Strive-for-Five."
- 3) This course will be graded S/U. An "S" grade will require:
 - a) Participants attend the Face-to-Face NDKA Conference in Mandan, ND.
 - b) Respond to discussion questions for each chapter.
 - c) Complete a final reflection at the very end of the course.