

# UPGRADE YOUR TEACHING CREDS

11 ONLINE CLASSES WORTH YOUR TIME

By Lucinda Blumenfeld

**W**hen you're a teacher, you have to keep going to school just to keep your job, so it pays to know the most interesting and convenient programs available. That's why we found not just 10, but 11 professional development options that *work* for teachers' real-life schedules. (Psst, one is even free!) From "Teaching Life Science" to "How to Get Parents on Your Side," these are courses that received top marks from other teachers, so you're likely to like them too!

## 1) BEST FOR CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

Penn State Online offers a grad certificate (15 credits) in children's literature just for teachers and librarians. What book lover wouldn't want to sign up for "The Art of the Picture Book" or "Fantasy Literature for Children"? The latter course takes you from A.A. Milne to J.K. Rowling with many stops along the way. Teachers report that online courses are as rigorous and as fascinating as

on-campus courses. "The best part was regular and connected feedback from professors," says one teacher. Classes use a combination of Web technology and, of course, real children's books.

**FORMAT:** Online courses

**PRICE:** \$551 per credit; \$1,653 per 3-credit course

**WHAT YOU GET:** Credit through Pennsylvania State University

**LEARN MORE:** [www.worldcampus.psu.edu/teach](http://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/teach)

## 2) BEST FOR SCIENCE & TECH: PBS TEACHERLINE

Go ahead, shoot for the stars—and take your students with you. PBS offers science courses that draw from its deep resources, including video foot-

age, experiments, and projects featured in programs such as *Nova* and *Zoom*. If you, like many of us, could use a brush-up in science, "Plants and Animals: Teaching Elementary Life Science" or "Teaching Reading in Science" might just be the course for you. The selection of reading and literacy courses are also top-notch. PBS courses require about five hours a week over six weeks. Assignments can be completed whenever or wherever it's convenient (no scheduled log-in times).

**FORMAT:** Online courses

**PRICE:** Varies

**WHAT YOU GET:** Units in continuing ed (CEU), professional development points (PDP), or even work toward a graduate degree. Offered in both intensive (45 hours/3 credits) and condensed (30 hours/2 credits) formats.

**LEARN MORE:** [www.teacherline.pbs.org](http://www.teacherline.pbs.org)

## 3) BEST FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION: SCHOLASTIC RED

Looking to upgrade your middle school's literature and writing program? Here's a course for you. "Foundations of Adolescent Literacy: A Professional Development Program for the Whole School" will teach you how to assess literacy needs at every grade level, lead a school-wide literacy initiative, and choose the right books for a new



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generation of adolescents. “After taking ‘Foundations,’ I revamped my whole sixth-grade reading program with new books and new activities,” says one teacher. First-grade teachers can head instead to “Putting Reading First in Your Classroom K-2.” The focus of Scholastic RED is to raise reading achievement. All courses are a combination of online learning and site-based study groups, so you’ll likely make some new teacher friends along the way.

**FORMAT:** Online courses

**PRICE:** \$475

**WHAT YOU GET:** Credit is available through eight different universities.

**LEARN MORE:** [www.scholasticred.com](http://www.scholasticred.com)

## 4) BEST FOR PERSONAL ENRICHMENT: WALDEN UNIVERSITY

You’ve been teaching awhile now and have your curriculum down. It’s time to delve into the complicated world of communication with courses such as “How to Get Parents on Your Side” and “The High Performing Teacher.” The word from teachers is these courses are great for stress reduction, motivation, and building positive relationships in and out of school. Other Walden courses with high marks? Several teachers told us they learned a great deal about conflict resolution and child psychology in “Succeeding with Difficult Students” and “Teaching Students to Get Along.” Walden’s online format includes personal journaling, automated grading, and digital homework submission.

**FORMAT:** Video and online courses

**PRICE:** \$450 per course

**WHAT YOU GET:** Graduate credit through Walden University

**LEARN MORE:** [www.waldenu.edu](http://www.waldenu.edu)

## 5) BEST FOR TECHNOGEEKS: VERNIER SOFTWARE AND TECHNOLOGY

In a free four-hour workshop offered in 40 national locations, science software provider Vernier offers teachers training for its new Labquest product: a handheld graphing interface for math and science curriculums, great for those who take an inquiry-based approach. Complete a follow-up project

using data-collection technology and earn two (quarter) Graduate Science credit hours.

**FORMAT:** Workshop in data-collection technology

**PRICE:** Free

**WHAT YOU GET:** Graduate credit through Portland State University

**LEARN MORE:** [www.vernier.com/workshop/evaluation.html](http://www.vernier.com/workshop/evaluation.html)

## 6) BEST FOR ART & HISTORY: ANNENBERG MEDIA RESOURCES

One of our favorite courses from Annenberg is a video workshop called “The Arts in Every Classroom,” which teaches you as an elementary teacher how to plan art units and incorporate them into the curriculum you are already teaching. The course includes how to use concepts from the avant-garde Cirque de Soleil to approach classroom arts in new ways. Alternatively, if you take “Inside Writing Communities” (for teachers of grades 3–5), you’ll have the chance to watch 10 master teachers model teaching strategies and then listen to them reflect on their practice. These are two terrific opportunities.

**FORMAT:** DVD/VHS workshops, Web site, and learning guides

**PRICE:** \$220–\$310 per DVD program

**WHAT YOU GET:** Graduate credit through Southern Oregon University and Colorado State University

**LEARN MORE:** [www.learner.org](http://www.learner.org)

## 7) BEST FOR SPECIAL ED: REGENT UNIVERSITY

With a nationwide shortage of special education teachers and the salaries rising, more and more classroom teachers are looking for special certification. Regent University offers a Masters in Special Education or a certificate in Teaching Autism, both media-rich and highly integrative. With classes such as “Methods for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders” and “Behavior Management and Social Skills,” there’s a lot to learn here. Participants can view professional videos, consult with faculty in a virtual classroom, or share insight with col-

leagues in group discussions.

**FORMAT:** Online courses with audio/video podcast components

**GRADES:** K–12

**PRICE:** \$175 per credit hour

**WHAT YOU GET:** Graduate credit through Regent University

**LEARN MORE:** [www.regent.edu/academics/online](http://www.regent.edu/academics/online)

## 8) BEST FOR ELL: PEARSON ACHIEVEMENT SOLUTIONS

“Introduction to SIOP,” based on the SIOP model for teaching ELL, offers weekly online discussions as well as activities to synthesize, apply, and reflect on learning. You can expect to find a well-articulated, practical model of sheltered instruction across content areas. And SIOP is only one of the site’s resources, all of which boast a highly specialized inquiry project model in which participants incorporate particular issues they face in their professional lives into their trajectory, find the best solutions, and glean from the wisdom of colleagues and experts.

**FORMAT:** Online or DVD courses

**PRICE:** \$435–\$485 per course

**WHAT YOU GET:** Graduate credit through Drake University

**LEARN MORE:** [www.teacher-courses.com](http://www.teacher-courses.com)

## 9) BEST FOR TECHNOPHOBES: APPLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Whether you are tech-savvy or tech-challenged, you can benefit from Apple’s enticing professional development courses, which are geared toward educators at all levels. In “iLife for the Classroom,” explore five of Apple’s most popular media applications, including iPhoto, iMovie, and iDVD. With “Documentary Filmmaking in the Classroom,” you’ll be able to teach students how to visually narrate their own stories using iMovie HD to integrate personal photos and video, print images, and clips. As one science teacher reports, “iMovie allows my students to focus on content in a way that can be easily shared. It’s an exciting way for students to take control of content,

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summarize it, and share it with others.

**FORMAT:** On-site workshops

**PRICE:** Varies

**WHAT YOU GET:** Graduate credit through Ball State University

**LEARN MORE:** [www.apple.com/education/solutions/apd](http://www.apple.com/education/solutions/apd)

## 10) BEST FOR LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION: NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Faculty at Nova Southeastern University tell us there is virtually no difference between their on-campus instruction and their online offerings. Choose from a multitude of courses covering the most current topics in education—from TESOL to teaching the learning impaired. We recommend the Masters of Science in Spanish Language Education and the Masters in Teaching English as a Second Language, both which

incorporate technology training and cross-cultural awareness. One satisfied teacher reports, “My coursework in TESOL helped me to integrate differentiated instruction in my lesson plans for my ELLs. Taking my courses online has made me more aware of the importance of technology, too, because I got to create multimedia language lessons.”

**FORMAT:** Online courses

**PRICE:** \$470 per credit

**WHAT YOU GET:** Graduate credit through Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)

**LEARN MORE:** [www.fischlerschool.nova.edu](http://www.fischlerschool.nova.edu)

## 11) BEST FOR BUSY SCHEDULES: THE UNIVERSITY OF SCRANTON

We like the University of Scranton for its flexibility; their online programs repeat

six times a year (at eight weeks each). One student reports, “I work 55 hours a week, have two small children and a wife who works...I found the program to be manageable because I could go to class anytime, day or night.” Courses in “Educational Psychology” and “Literacy and Diversity,” among others, will help you to interact better with both your gifted students and students with disabilities. A key feature: If you need to take a break for any reason, no problem! Classes can be paused and resumed. Virtual office hours and real-time, faculty-monitored chat rooms give the program bonus points in our book.

**FORMAT:** Online, CD-Rom, video, and audio courses

**PRICE:** \$385 per credit hour

**WHAT YOU GET:** Graduate credit through the University of Scranton

**LEARN MORE:** [www.uscranton.com/top10](http://www.uscranton.com/top10)

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# Coming Next Issue in *Instructor*

## Going Green

How you can make your classroom environmentally friendly

## IEPS Made Simple

Managing IEPS can be a complicated nightmare. Here's how to make it easier.

## The Big 10

Teachers choose the top professional books for you from the past decade.

## Holiday Bulletin Boards

From Thanksgiving to Chinese New Year, fresh and stylish boards that teach

## 7 Everyday Bad Behaviors

(And how you can turn them around!)

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