

Educator Preparation Program Foundational Literacy Skills Standards 2025 Guidance Document

Purpose

This guidance document supports the Educator Preparation Program (EPP) Foundational Literacy Skills (FLS) standards review. It provides information and tools to support EPP teams in collaboration, standards alignment, and completion of the literacy review process. Additional support documents can be found on the department's [Literacy in Educator Preparation](#) page.

Literacy Review

In accordance with the Tennessee Literacy Success Act of 2021 ("the Act"), EPPs must provide training on reading instruction focused primarily on foundational literacy skills standards to applicable candidates seeking licensure to teach grades K-3 as well as candidates seeking instructional leader licenses. In alignment with the Act, these foundational literacy skills standards include:

- how to effectively teach the foundational literacy skills of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
- how to identify access points and scaffolds needed for teaching students with advanced reading skills and students with significant reading deficiencies;
- how to identify the characteristics of dyslexia through a universal screening process and provide effective instruction for teaching students with these characteristics using evidence-based, multisensory interventions;
- how to implement reading instruction using high-quality instructional materials (HQIM);
- behavior management through trauma-informed principles for the classroom and other developmentally appropriate supports to ensure that students can effectively access reading instruction; and
- how to administer a universal reading screener to students and use the resulting data to improve reading instruction and appropriate interventions for students.

The foundational literacy skills standards shall be implemented in all programs that lead to endorsement in:

- Early Childhood Education (pre-K-3)
- Integrated Early Childhood Education (Birth-K or pre-K-3)
- Elementary Education (K-5)
- Special Education Interventionist (K-8 or 6-12)
- Special Education Comprehensive (K-12)
- Instructional Leader (pre-K-12)

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-5-5607, the department is required to conduct an annual review of EPP implementation of foundational literacy skills standards to be included in EPP annual reports and published in the State Board of Education Educator Preparation Report Card. In the 2025 review, EPPs will submit standards alignment matrices, course syllabi as reflected in the standards alignment matrices, and a performance narrative.

Guiding Questions

To support EPPs with the review, guiding questions are provided below to facilitate discussion among literacy faculty, encourage reflection about literacy instruction, and offer a structure for reviewing the components of the 2025 literacy review. These questions are not all-inclusive and serve to guide the review process.

2025 Guiding Questions for Evidence of Standard Alignment and Implementation

Components	Guiding Questions
Matrices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the content on the matrices in alignment with foundational literacy skills standards expectations? • Is the content on the matrices in alignment with foundational literacy skills terminology (absent of cueing, guided reading, balanced literacy, etc.)? • Is all information on the matrices current, accurate, and reflective of FLS instruction? • Are specific key assessments and/or clinical experiences included for each standard? • Are accurate course names and descriptions provided via a link, as typed details, a separate tab, or a separate document? • Are columns complete for each standard row (<i>course name and description, course key assessments, clinical experiences</i>)?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are all standards on the matrices clearly aligned to either course key assessments or clinical experiences?
Syllabi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the content on the syllabi in alignment with the expectations of the foundational literacy skills standards? Is the content on the syllabi in alignment with foundational literacy skills terminology (absent of cueing, guided reading, balanced literacy, etc.)? Are the syllabi consistent with the course key assessments and clinical experiences within matrices? Are all syllabi as reflected in matrices uploaded (<i>early childhood/integrated early childhood, elementary, special education, instructional leader</i>)? Is there evidence of clear standard alignment within each uploaded syllabus (standards from matrices reflected in syllabi with standard numbers or letters for instructional leader)? <p><i>** Inclusion of EPP literacy standards can be in course objectives/outcomes/requirements, assignments, or assessments, and/or embedded in weekly instruction.</i></p>
Performance Narrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What evidence demonstrates candidate mastery in foundational literacy skills, dyslexia, HQIM, universal screeners, and trauma informed practices? What support is provided to candidates if they do not initially master FLS standards? How is FLS standard mastery tracked?

Standards Alignment Matrices

The standards alignment matrices should be viewed as a living document to support regular reflection and examination of the primary courses teaching the foundational literacy skills standards. When using the matrices collaboratively, EPP teams can identify where and how the FLS standards are taught. A shared process further strengthens alignment and allows the many components of literacy instruction (and the review) to be approached as a cohesive process instead of individual tasks.

Educator candidates should be able to understand and implement all literacy standards and research-based knowledge and practices to enable all students to become proficient, motivated, and independent readers and writers, and learners as they build and share knowledge through their reading and writing ([Literacy and Specialty Area Standards Policy 5.505](#)). For the purpose of the 2025 review, standards included in the matrices must be clearly aligned and evident within each syllabus and consistent with details provided in the standards alignment matrices.

Best practices in using the matrices include but are not limited to:

- faculty collaboration on the matrices' revision,
- verifying content on the matrices are in alignment with FLS and void of any terminology misaligned with FLS,
- confirming alignment between matrices and syllabi,
- using the matrices to identify any gaps in instruction and instructional areas to strengthen,
- providing clear, identifiable alignment between course meeting the standard and course key assessments and clinical experiences,
- removal of all information no longer applicable, and
- Inclusion of specific language on the matrices when identifying course key assessments and clinical experiences that determine mastery.
 - For example, in
 - column C, *Course Key Assessments*, list the specific assignment/assessment used to determine candidate mastery of the standard. It is not necessary to include assignments/assessments where the standard is introduced or reinforced.
 - column D, *Clinical Experiences*, provide specific clinical experiences used to demonstrate candidate's understanding and application of the standard expectations.

Course Key Assessments Specific Language Examples	Non-Specific Examples
Progress Monitoring Quiz	Quiz
High leverage practices research paper	Research paper
UTK Early Writing Module and its exit assessment	Modules
IRIS progress monitoring case study	Case study
Family engagement literacy project	Project
Instructional practices presentations related to literacy development, language acquisition, and communication for students with exceptionalities	Presentations

Clinical Experiences Specific Language Examples	Non-Specific Examples
Candidates spend 30+ hours in an elementary literacy classroom. Candidates administer phonics and spelling assessments in the field placement and administer a universal screener. The results of these assessments are used to determine evidence-based, multi-sensory interventions.	30+ hours in an elementary literacy classroom
14 hours of clinical experience including an emphasis on lesson preparation with a mentor teacher and delivering at least three literacy lessons including whole group and small group instruction. Use feedback and reflection on each lesson for improvement.	14 hours clinical experience
Complete field experience reflection journal with a focus on phonics awareness strategies.	field experience journal
Portfolio of teaching strategies that emphasize vocabulary development, questioning, motivation, formative assessment, and development of thinking skills.	portfolio
Candidates engage in weekly tutoring at an elementary school using approved TN Foundational Skills curriculum.	tutoring

Syllabi

Syllabi serve as an artifact of instructional evidence for the 2025 literacy review. Syllabi for all courses included in the standard alignment matrices should be uploaded for review. Within the submitted syllabi, ensure content aligns with the standards alignment matrices. Standards from the matrices should be evident on the syllabi and can be included in course objectives/outcomes/requirements, assignments, or assessments, and/or embedded in weekly instruction. It is at the discretion of the EPP faculty to decide where the standard alignment evidence will be located within the syllabi. See the appendix for examples.

Textbooks and educational resources used within courses or included in reading list should be assessed frequently for alignment to the science of reading and current literacy instructional practices. Please review textbooks and ensure all instruction and instructional materials are aligned with the science of reading methodology and current TN EPP Literacy standards.

Performance Narrative

The narrative provides an opportunity to review instructional practices with the EPP literacy team regarding the foundational literacy skills and the subsequent candidate knowledge and performance on coursework and clinical practice. In the narrative, highlight the levels of success observed with teacher candidates. Include compelling evidence demonstrating candidate mastery with EPP literacy standards relating to:

- Foundational literacy skills,
- Dyslexia,
- HQIM,
- Universal screeners, and
- Trauma informed practices.

Foundational Literacy Skills Terminology:

The key terminology and concepts below should be included in the literacy instruction courses for teacher candidates.

- *Access points:* Academic expectations that are simplified or written at a reduced complexity level that reflects the intent of the standard without modifying or changing the ultimate student expectation. Access points provide ALL students access to the general curriculum using high-quality instructional materials (HQIM).
- *Alphabetic principle:* The understanding that letters and letter combinations are symbols that represent speech sounds (phonemes) in words, or that the sounds of language (phonemes) are represented by letters (graphemes) and letter combinations.
- *Decodable text:* Texts composed of predictably patterned words and other high-frequency words that a student has already been taught.
- *Decoding:* The act of sounding out words using phonics-- linking visual symbols to speech sounds to connect print to speech.
- *Encoding:* Encoding is reciprocal to decoding and is the cognitive process of transferring speech to print in order to spell (linking a speech sound to a visual symbol).
- *Evidence-based practices:* Practices, materials, and educational strategies proven to be effective via research studies.
- *Fluency:* Reading with sufficient accuracy, rate (appropriate to text and task), and expression to support comprehension.

- *Foundational literacy skills*: The continuum of skills that research has demonstrated are required to systematically teach reading, including phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension.
- *Grapheme*: A letter or combination of letters that represent a phoneme. For example, ‘b’ and ‘oy’ are the graphemes in boy.
- *High-Quality Instructional Materials (HQIM)*: High-quality instructional materials (HQIM) are educational resources that are designed to be engaging and relevant to students, aligned with academic standards, and reflect the best available research. HQIM materials respect the time and role of the teacher by freeing them up to plan for the kinds of instructional supports that all students need to become skilled readers.
- *Intellectual preparation*: A fundamental aspect of effective teaching that plays an essential role in ensuring students have access to high-quality instruction and success. It refers to the process through which teachers acquire, develop, and apply their knowledge, skills, and resources to plan and deliver engaging and meaningful lessons.
- *Knowledge building/Comprehension building*: The term “building knowledge” refers to the comprehension strand of Scarborough’s rope (knowledge, vocabulary, sentences, connections, and gist). It is reading instruction focused on reading outcomes to develop conceptual understandings on topics (e.g., amphibians, the American Revolution) after reading a series of texts on the same concept.
- *Learning acceleration*: A learning model in which “just in time” intervention or learning is coupled with grade level content and standards instruction to create a learning environment immediately responsive to student knowledge gaps and/or lack of understanding to provide students better access to core (Tier I) instruction.
- *Lesson preparation*: Identifying the progression of lessons and deciding on how materials will be used. It involves considering the sequence of instructional practices, the amount of modeling needed, and anticipation of common student answers. Lesson preparation provides teachers the opportunity to practice delivering the lesson.
- *Letter knowledge*: The ability to identify the letters of the alphabet with speed and automaticity. Letter knowledge is an understanding of alphabetic and print concepts, as well as the ability to identify and discriminate between letters (visual discrimination).
- *Morphemes*: An indivisible unit of meaning: a prefix, suffix, root, or base.
- *Morphology*: The study of meaningful units in language and how they are combined.

- *Oral language*: Oral language is spoken language, including spoken words and articulated sounds.
- *Orthography*: A writing system for representing language.
- *Orthographic Mapping*: The process in the brain that connects phonemes (the units of sound in words) to their graphemes (the visual representation of those sounds) and to the meanings of specific words in memory.
- *Phoneme*: The smallest distinct units of sound we can perceive in spoken language (i.e., The /b/ and /oi/ are the phonemes in boy).
- *Phonemic awareness*: A subset of phonological awareness skills that focuses just on the discrimination and manipulation of the sounds (phonemes) in words.
- *Phonics*: The relationship between the letters of written language and the sounds of spoken language and is based on the alphabetic principle.
- *Phonological awareness*: Identifying and manipulating units of oral language such as oral rhymes, alliteration, words, syllables, onset-rimes, and phonemes.
- *Print concepts*: A broad term that refers to the understanding of the purposes of written language. A student who understands print concepts understands that written language conveys meaning.
- *Scarborough's Rope*: A visual representation of the process of reading, developed by Hollis Scarborough. It consists of two main strands: the "word recognition" strand and the "language comprehension" strand. These strands are interconnected and interdependent, representing the complete skill of reading. When all component parts intertwine, it results in skilled, accurate, and fluent reading with strong comprehension.
- *Simple View of Reading*: A student's reading comprehension is a product of their decoding ability and language comprehension (Decoding X Language Comprehension = Reading Comprehension).
- *Sounds-first*: An approach to instruction that acknowledges the fact that students' ability to notice and manipulate sounds (phonological and phonemic awareness) is the first step in foundational skills development.
- *Student work analysis*: Student work analysis is a powerful practice that holds significant importance in the cycle of improvement and plays a vital role in guiding teachers' next steps in preparing instruction. Engaging in the collaborative process of looking at student

work allows a group of educators to analyze the learning experiences of students and determine its effectiveness.

- *Tennessee's Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI2)*: A multi-tiered approach focused on prevention and early intervention that uses a data-driven, problem-solving model to identify and prioritize coherence and alignment of instruction to ensure all students are provided the supports needed to access grade level content.
- *Unit preparation*: The process of unpacking a unit so that teachers understand how it has been designed to support high-quality instruction and student learning. The unpacking process ensures teachers understand the intentionality behind how priority skills and/or essential questions build throughout the unit and ensures teachers know what they are looking to see and hear in student responses and/or tasks to assess student learning.
- *Word recognition*: This is dependent on a student's understanding of sounds, letters, and words, and an awareness of the relationships between them.

References

[Dyslexia Resource Guide September 2024.pdf \(tn.gov\)](#)

[Early Reading Training Course I](#)

[Early Reading Training Course II](#)

[Educator Preparation Providers \(EPP\) Literacy Convening 2024](#)

[Intellectual Preparation Hub](#)

[K-12 Knowledge Building Lessons IPG](#)

[Response to Instruction and Intervention Manual](#)

[Tennessee English Language Arts Standards \(tn.gov\)](#)

[TN Foundational Skills Instructional Practice Guide](#)

Appendix

The appendix provides several examples of how standard alignment can be made evident in course syllabi. Examples A and B illustrate how standards can be shown to connect to student learning outcomes.

Example A: Standards in Student Learning Outcome

Student Learning Outcomes	Course Assignments	Standards
Teacher educator candidates must demonstrate their knowledge of theoretical and research-based instructional practices related to students' literacy development, language acquisition, reading, writing, and communication.	Diagnostic Port. Group Discussions Article Analysis Practicum Quizzes Reading Inventory Conditions of Lrng	CAEP: 1.b, 4.a, 4.b, 4.c, 4.d InTASC: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 TN Standards: These standards come from Dialogic Reading and Complexity modules: 1.1a; 1.1b; 1.1c; 1.1d; 1.1e; 1.1f; 1.1g; 1.1h; 1.2a; 1.2b; 1.2c; 1.2d; 1.2e; 1.2f; 1.2g; 1.2h; 1.2i; 1.2j; 1.3a; 1.3b; 1.3c; 1.3d; 1.3e; 1.3f; 1.4a; 1.4b; 1.4c; 1.4d; 1.4e; 1.4f; 1.4g; 1.4h; 1.5a; 1.5b; 1.6a; 1.6b; 1.6c; 1.6d; 1.6e; 1.7a; 1.7b; 1.7c; 1.7d; 1.7h; 1.8a; 1.8b; 1.8c; 1.8d; 1.8e; 1.8f; 1.8g; 1.8h; 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 4.3; 4.5; 4.7; 4.8; 4.10; 4.13; 5.1; 5.2a; 5.2b; 5.2c; 5.9; 7 Foundational Skills Modules for Special Education: Tiered System of Support, Dyslexia pts. 1 & 2, Oral Language, Phonological Awareness, Phonics and Word Recognition, Decoding and Reading Difficulties, Morphology and Multisyllabic Decoding, Reading Fluency, Vocabulary, Spelling & Orthographic Knowledge, Reading Comprehension, Other Evidence Based Practice

8. Provide scaffolded instruction that supports students' strengths and access to grade-level standards while addressing their instructional needs. (TN LIT 4.2)
9. Identify design principles of high-quality ELA instructional materials and use preparation protocols focused on intellectual preparation and internalization to prepare for and deliver instruction using complex, grade-appropriate text. (TN LIT 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3)

Example B: Standards in Course Outcomes

Course Outcomes

At the end of this course, the candidate will be proficient in the standards below. As indicated in bold are the Diversity Proficiencies attached to each core standard.

- 1) Design and implement developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences (InTASC Standards 1 (**a, b, c, e, g, h, i, k**); **EPP Literacy 2.4, 2.11, 3.3, 4.3, 4.13, 5.1, 5.8, 5.15**)
- 2) Use their understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards. (InTASC Standards 2 (**a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, m, n**; **EPP Literacy Standard 7, Standard 8.1-8.8**)

Example C illustrates how standards can be shown to connect to course goals/objectives.

Example C: Standards in Course Goals/Objectives

Course Goals/Objectives	INTASC	TN LITERACY	CEC
Understands and applies evidence/research based instructional methods for teaching phonological awareness, phonemic awareness (both basic and advanced), and to teach beginning readers the concepts of print.	4, 4.a, 4i, 4j, 4n, 7, 7.a, 7.b, 7.g, 7.k, 7.m, 8, 8.a, 8.h, 8.k	1.1, 1.1d, 1.1(1), 1.1(2), 1.1f, 1.2a, 1.2c, 1.2d, 3.1, 3.2,	3.0, 3.1, 5.0, 5.4, 6.2

Examples D illustrates how standards can be shown connected to course assignments.

Example D: Standards in Assignments

Literacy Strategy Demonstrations= 5%

- Literacy Strategy: 5%

Each candidate will be assigned a research-based strategy targeting foundational literacy skills to demonstrate from the course texts and additional resources The demonstration should include a description of the strategy's purpose and directions, differentiation, research to support its use, opportunities to model and practice the strategy, and an abbreviated lesson plan. The strategy demonstration will be within a small group rotation. (EPP 1.1f, 1.2a-g, 1.7a, 2.4, 2.11)

Example E illustrates how standards can be shown to be embedded in weekly instruction.

Example E: Standards in Weekly Instruction

	Topic	Reading	Assignments Due
8/23	Overview of the Course/Syllabus/Texts		
8/25	Let's review some of the Basics Pre-test EPPLS Review of key standards from semester 1		
8/30	Let's review some of the Basics EPPLS 1.1,1.2		In- class Phonemic awareness and Phonics practice
9/1	Video-Advanced Decoding EPPLS 1.1,1.2,2.11,3.1,3.2,3.4,4.3,4.13,4.14,5.4,5.8,	Chapter 9- assigned pages 355-378 View Videos posted on Sakai	Post-test on video In class-Teaching syllable types w partners

July 9 We will discuss strategies for whole class settings and small group/RTI settings, teaching reading strategies one-on-one. Review of dyslexia materials from EDU313, review of universal screening data from EDU331. TFLS 1.1d,1,2; 1.1g,h,i,j;	July 11 Diagnostic Reading Reading Comprehension Early Writing TFLS 1.1f, 1.7
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