

Preliminary Education Specialist Credential

Program Standard 7: Effective Literacy Instruction for Students with Disabilities

The credential program’s coursework and supervised field experiences encompass the study of effective means of teaching literacy across all disciplines¹ based on California’s State Board of Education (SBE)-adopted [English Language Arts \(ELA\) and Literacy Standards](#) and [English Language Development \(ELD\) Standards](#), and for Early Childhood Special Education programs, the [Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations](#) and the [Preschool Learning Foundations](#). Program coursework and supervised field experiences are aligned with the current, SBE-adopted [English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework](#), including the crosscutting themes of Foundational Skills, Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, and Content Knowledge, as well as the [Preschool Curriculum Framework](#). The program emphasizes the relationships among the five themes, including the importance of the foundational skills to student learning across all themes and how progress in the other themes also supports progress in the foundational skills. Through the integration of literacy coursework and supervised clinical practice, candidates learn that student instruction in each of the themes is essential and should occur concurrently (rather than sequentially), with emphasis based on grade-level standards. Candidates also learn that for multilingual and English learner students, concurrent instruction in each of the themes through integrated and designated ELD is critical.

Grounded in Universal Design for Learning and asset-based pedagogies,³ the program supports the development of candidates’ knowledge, skills, and abilities expressed in the Teaching Performance Expectations to provide effective literacy instruction that is organized, comprehensive, systematic, evidence based, culturally and linguistically sustaining, and responsive to students’ age and prior literacy development. Candidates also learn to provide literacy instruction that is responsive to students’ linguistic, cognitive, and social strengths and collaboration with other service providers. Candidates learn the power of language (both oral—spoken/signed—and written) to understand and transform the world and to create socially just learning environments. The program builds candidates’ understanding that high-quality literacy

¹ Literacy comprises reading, writing, speaking, and listening; these processes are closely intertwined and should be understood to include oral, written, visual, and multimodal communication. The themes of the *ELA/ELD Framework* (Foundational Skills, Meaning Making, Language Development, Effective Expression, and Content Knowledge) crosscut the four strands of the ELA/literacy standards (Reading [Literature, Informational Text, Foundational Skills], Writing, Speaking and Listening, and Language) and the three parts of the ELD standards (Interacting in Meaningful Ways [Communicative Modes], Learning About How English Works [Language Processes], and Using Foundational Literacy Skills). In practice, these themes and standards are overlapping and should be integrated.

² For students with disabilities the terms reading, writing, listening, and speaking should be broadly interpreted. For example, reading could include the use of braille, screen-reader technology, or other assistive devices, while writing could include the use of a scribe, computer, or speech to text technology. In a similar vein, speaking and listening could include American Sign Language, sign-supported speech, or other means of communication.

³ [Asset-based pedagogies](#) view the diversity that students bring to the classroom, including culture, language, disability, socio-economic status, immigration status, and sexuality as characteristics that add value and strength to classrooms and communities.

instruction integrates all strands of the ELA/literacy standards, all parts of the ELD standards, and other disciplinary standards to develop students' capacities as effective and critical readers, writers, listeners, and speakers.

The study of high-quality literacy instruction in the program also incorporates the following elements of the [California Comprehensive State Literacy Plan](#):

- a) Principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion, including books and other instructional materials and practices that are asset-based and culturally and linguistically responsive, affirming, and sustaining⁴
- b) [Multi-Tiered System of Support](#), including best first instruction; targeted, supplemental instruction for students whose literacy skills are not progressing as expected toward grade-level standards; and intensive intervention for individuals who have not benefited from supplemental support
- c) Instruction that is responsive to individual students' age, language and literacy development, and literacy goals; that engages families and communities as educational partners; and that is reflective of social and emotional learning and trauma-informed practices
- d) Incorporation of the [California Dyslexia Guidelines](#)
- e) Integrated and designated ELD
- f) Knowledge of how to promote multiliteracy in both English-medium and multilingual programs
- g) Assessment for various purposes, including formative, progress monitoring, and summative literacy assessment; screening to determine students' literacy profiles, including English learner typologies, and to identify potential difficulties in reading and writing, including risk for dyslexia; and diagnostic assessment in response to referrals for additional assessment and intensive intervention

Consistent with the *ELA/ELD Framework*, candidates learn instructional practices, through coursework and supervised field experiences, that are active, motivating, and engaging and to provide literacy instruction in collaboration with other educators. Candidates learn that effective practices begin with building on students' cultural and linguistic assets, backgrounds, experiences, and knowledge, including family and community, in all instruction. The program makes clear the importance of creating environments that promote students' autonomy in learning, including providing choices in reading and other literacy-related activities. Candidates

⁴ Culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and funds of knowledge are all instructional approaches that affirm students' cultural lives—both family and community—and incorporate this knowledge into the classroom and collectively deem students' lived experiences as assets. These practices affirm the diversity that students bring to the classroom, including culture, language, disability, socioeconomic status, immigration status, sexual orientation, and gender identity as characteristics that add value and strength to classrooms and communities. They include instructional approaches that leverage the cultural and linguistic experiences of students to make learning more relevant and effective.

also learn that instructional practices vary according to students' learning profiles and goals, age, English language proficiency, and assessed strengths and needs and include, as appropriate, direct instruction, collaborative learning, and inquiry-based learning. The program also addresses community-based instruction for students with disabilities, as well as the expanded core curriculum for students with visual impairments. Candidates learn the value of guided self-assessment and goal setting for student independence, motivation, and learning. Candidates also learn ways to collaborate and partner with families and communities ensuring that families are welcomed, informed, heard, and included in literacy development opportunities.

7a. Foundational Skills⁵

The Education Specialist credential program offers coursework and supervised field experiences that include evidence-based means of teaching the foundational skills to all students as a part of a comprehensive literacy program, with special emphasis in transitional kindergarten through grade three. Foundational skills include print concepts, including letters of the alphabet; phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness; phonics, spelling, and word recognition; decoding and encoding; morphological awareness; and text reading fluency, including accuracy, prosody (expression), and rate (an indicator of automaticity). Through the program, candidates learn that effective instruction in foundational reading skills is structured and organized as well as direct, systematic, and explicit. The program ensures that candidates understand that instruction in phonological awareness and phonics includes phonemic awareness; letter-sound, spelling-sound, and sound-symbol correspondences; spelling patterns; and practice in connected, decodable text. In addition, candidates learn that instruction in text reading fluency should include emphases on spelling and syllable patterns, semantics, morphology, and syntax. As a result, candidates learn the connections among the foundational skills, language, and cognitive skills that support students as they learn to read and write increasingly complex disciplinary texts with comprehension and effective expression. The program also teaches that decoding requires mapping of spellings to their pronunciation, while encoding requires mapping of phonemes to their spellings, and emphasizes teaching both in ways that reflect their reciprocal relationship. Accordingly, the program teaches candidates to provide explicit instruction for young children in letter formation/printing in conjunction with applicable foundational skills and to help children apply their encoding skills in comprehensive writing instruction.

The program also includes evidence-based means of teaching foundational skills to multilingual and English learner students while they are simultaneously developing oral English language proficiency, and in some cases literacy skills in an additional language.⁶ The program teaches candidates to plan foundational skills instruction based on students' previous literacy experiences in their home languages and to differentiate instruction using guidance from the

⁵ See also the [Resource Guide to Foundational Skills of the California Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts](#).

⁶ See updated [Bilingual Authorization Program Standards and new Bilingual Teaching Performance Expectations](#).

ELA/ELD Framework, including knowledge of cross-language transfer between the home languages and English.

The program teaches candidates that effective instruction in foundational skills employs early intervention strategies informed by ongoing measures of student progress and diagnostic techniques and includes tiered supports in inclusive settings⁷ for students with reading, writing, or other literacy difficulties and disabilities, including students at risk for or with dyslexia. Candidates learn to monitor students' progress based on their knowledge of critical milestones of foundational skill development and to adjust and differentiate instruction for students whose skills are not progressing as expected toward grade-level standards. Candidates also learn how to collaborate with students' families and guardians as well as with teachers, specialists, school psychologists, other professionals, and administrators from the school or district to conduct comprehensive literacy assessments in coordination with assessment teams; develop Individualized Education Plans for eligible students, including students at risk for and with dyslexia; support classroom teachers as they plan and provide supplemental instruction; and provide accommodations through direct supplemental support and/or intensive intervention as appropriate. The program provides supervised, guided practice in clinical settings that allow candidates to provide initial, supplemental, or intensive intervention instruction in foundational skills, particularly at beginning levels of decoding.

7b. Meaning Making

Coursework and supervised field experiences emphasize meaning making as the central purpose for interacting with and interpreting texts, composing texts, engaging in research, participating in discussion, speaking with others, and listening to, viewing, and giving presentations. This includes the use of assistive technology and/or Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) devices as appropriate for students with disabilities. The program addresses literal and inferential comprehension with all students at all grades and in all disciplines, including making connections with prior knowledge and experiences. The program also teaches the importance of attending to a range of higher order cognitive skills at all grades appropriate to students' development, such as reasoning, inferencing, perspective taking, transfer/generalization, and critical reading, writing, listening, and speaking across disciplines. The program ensures that candidates understand that among the contributors to meaning making are language, including vocabulary and grammatical and discourse-level understandings; content knowledge; motivation and engagement; comprehension monitoring; and in the case of reading and writing, the ability to recognize and produce printed words and use the alphabetic code to express ideas automatically and efficiently with understanding.

The program highlights the importance of providing students opportunities to interact with a range of print and digital, high-quality literary and informational texts that are developmentally appropriate, fully inclusive, culturally and linguistically relevant, and affirming as listeners, readers, speakers, and writers and to share their understandings, insights, and responses in

⁷ See the California Department of Education/WestEd 2021 publication, [California's Progress Toward Achieving ONE SYSTEM: Reforming Education to Serve All Students](#).

collaboration with others. Through coursework and supervised field experiences, candidates learn to engage students in reading, listening, speaking, writing, and viewing closely (i.e., with close and thoughtful attention) to draw evidence from texts, ask and answer questions, and support analysis, reflection, and research. Candidates also learn to promote deep and sustained reading of increasingly complex texts and to plan instruction, including intentional scaffolding and integration of students' assets, based on an analysis of the text complexity of instructional materials and the integration of meaning making with other themes.

7c. Language Development

Coursework and supervised field experiences emphasize language development as the cornerstone of literacy, learning, and relationship building and as a social process and meaning making system. Candidates learn that it is with and through language that students learn, think, and express information, ideas, perspectives, and questions orally and in writing. The program presents ways to create environments and frame interactions that foster oral and written language development for all students, including discipline-specific academic language. Candidates learn to facilitate communication for students who use American Sign Language, eye gaze, vocalizations, AAC devices, alternative learning media (e.g., braille), or other communication strategies. The program focuses on instruction that values and leverages students' existing linguistic repertoires, including home languages and dialects, and that accepts and encourages translanguaging. The program promotes multilingualism and addresses multiliteracy in both English-medium and multilingual programs.

The program addresses the importance of developing students' language, including their knowledge of how language works and the impact of students' disabilities on their language development. Candidates learn to support students' oral and written language development, including vocabulary knowledge and use. The program highlights effective teaching of vocabulary both indirectly (through rich and varied language experiences, frequent independent reading, and word play/word consciousness) and directly (through the explicit teaching of general academic and discipline-specific terms and of independent word learning strategies, including morphology and etymology). The program also attends to grammatical and discourse-level understandings of language. Candidates learn that grammatical structures (e.g., syntax) and vocabulary interact to form text types or genres that vary according to purpose, intended audience, context, situation, and discipline. The program addresses ways to facilitate students' learning of complex sentence and text structures and emphasizes that students enrich their language as they read, write, speak, and listen; interact with one another; learn about language; create diverse oral, print, digital, and multimodal texts; and engage with rich content across disciplines. Candidates learn to plan instruction based on the analysis of instructional materials and tasks; the assessment (formal and informal) of students' speaking, writing, or other communications; understanding of students' English language proficiency; and the integration of language development with other themes.

7d. Effective Expression

Coursework and supervised field experiences address effective oral and written expression, including how students learn to effectively express themselves as activity and discussion partners, presenters, and writers and to use digital media and visual displays to enhance their expression in a manner that is appropriate for their age and development. Candidates learn how to engage students in a range of interactions and collaborative conversations and to prioritize extended conversations with diverse partners on grade-level topics and texts and to facilitate communication for students who use American Sign Language, eye gaze, vocalizations, AAC devices, or other communication strategies. Candidates learn to help students identify effective expression in what they read, listen to, and view as they examine the words, images, and organizational structure of written, oral, or visual texts, including the nonverbal and social interactions depicted or implied in the texts. Through the program, candidates learn to teach students to discuss, orally present, and write in ways appropriate to their age and development so that their meanings are conveyed clearly, logically, powerfully, and, when appropriate and desired, poetically. Candidates also learn how to help students communicate in ways appropriate for their purpose, audience, context, and task and gain command over the conventions of written and spoken English (along with other languages in multilingual programs) as they create print and digital texts. The program focuses on candidate instruction and supervised support that values and leverages students' existing languages and dialects, including translanguaging, and that promotes effective expression in languages other than English in both English-medium and multilingual programs.

Through coursework and supervised field experiences, candidates learn to engage students in writing for varied purposes and to prioritize daily writing, including informal writing, to support learning and reflection across disciplines. They also learn to teach students to plan, develop, provide feedback to peers, revise using peer and teacher feedback, edit, and produce their own writing and oral presentations in increasingly sophisticated genres, drawing on the modes of opinion/argumentation, information, and narration. Candidates learn the importance of supporting students to use keyboarding, assistive technology, and other learning media, as appropriate, and the value of developing spelling and handwriting fluency in the writing process. Candidates also learn to provide explicit instruction in letter formation/printing, including the use of assistive technology as needed, and related language conventions, such as capitalization and punctuation, in conjunction with applicable decoding skills. In addition, candidates learn to engage students in self- and peer-assessment using a range of tools and to allocate sufficient time for creation, reflection, and revision. The program teaches candidates to plan instruction based on the analysis of instructional materials and tasks; the assessment (formal and informal) of students' speaking, writing, or other communications; and the integration of effective expression with other themes.

7e. Content Knowledge

Coursework and supervised field experiences address content knowledge, which includes literary, cultural, and discipline-specific knowledge, as a powerful contributor to the

comprehension of texts and sources of information and ideas. The program highlights the integration of literacy across disciplines and the reciprocal relationships among the development of academic language(s), literacy, and content knowledge. Additionally, the program promotes the collaboration of educators across disciplines to plan and implement instruction that maximizes students' development of literacy skills and content knowledge. The program also teaches candidates to understand that while building content knowledge enhances literacy development, it also serves to motivate many students, particularly when the content relevance is clear, reflects and values students' diverse experiences and cultures, and is responsive to their interests.

The program emphasizes the importance of full access to content instruction—including through printed and digital texts and other learning media, discussions, experimentation, and hands-on explorations—for all students. The program teaches candidates to provide the supports needed based on students' language proficiency levels or learning differences and addresses inclusive practices, including access to incidental learning experiences, and co-teaching models. The program helps candidates build students' understandings of disciplinary literacy—the ways in which disciplines use language and literacy to engage with content and communicate as members of discourse communities (e.g., historians, scientists). The program addresses the role of content knowledge as students navigate increasingly complex literary and informational texts, research questions of interest, evaluate the credibility of sources, and share knowledge as writers and speakers in ways that are appropriate to students' age and development. The program also teaches the importance of wide and independent reading in knowledge building and literacy development. In addition, the program provides multiple opportunities for candidates to learn how to promote digital literacy and the use of educational and assistive technology, including the ability to find, evaluate, use, share, analyze, create, and communicate digital resources safely and responsibly, and to foster digital citizenship.⁸ The program teaches candidates to plan instruction based on the analysis of instructional materials, tasks, and student progress as well as the integration of content knowledge with other themes.

7f. Literacy Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Coursework and supervised field experiences provide candidates an understanding of how various disabilities can impact literacy instruction (e.g., dyslexia, dysgraphia, autism, speech/language impairment, varied cognitive abilities, executive function disorder, visual impairments and blindness, deaf and hard of hearing). The program addresses how candidates can appropriately adapt, differentiate, and accommodate instruction to provide access to the curriculum for all students. The program teaches candidates to understand that a student's membership in a particular disability category represents a label for a qualifying condition and that the range of severity of disability and the educational needs within each category vary widely. Candidates learn that services should be based on individual need and not a qualifying condition. The program ensures that candidates understand Multi-Tiered System of Support and the value of providing initial, supplemental, and intensive instruction in inclusive settings, including co-teaching and the use of instructional support personnel, including classroom

⁸ See [California Digital Learning Integration and Standards Guidance](#) for additional information.

assistants and specialists (e.g., support during center rotations, working with students on individual goals, facilitating whole group activities to allow candidates to work with students on individual goals). The program addresses the importance of data-based decision making to plan intensive intervention that is responsive to students' age and development, including (as appropriate) continued emphasis on early literacy skills to permit access to literacy and content across all disciplines.

Additionally, the program helps candidates understand how to collaborate with families and guardians, multidisciplinary teams (including, but not limited to, general education teachers, reading/language arts specialists, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Visual Impairment teachers and specialists), and others to offer additional assessment and instructional support. The program also teaches candidates to provide appropriate adaptations (accommodations and modifications) and assistive technology that ensure equitable access to the curriculum for students with disabilities, including strategies such as fingerspelling decoding or pre-braille skills to support students who are deafblind or have visual impairments or blindness, as appropriate. The program addresses the importance of facilitating and supporting students' self-advocacy skills based on their individual needs to ensure access to appropriate adaptations (accommodations, modifications, and when necessary, compensatory strategies). The program also teaches candidates to understand the distinction between the characteristics of emerging bi/multilingualism and the range of learning disabilities. Candidates learn to collaborate with language development specialists to select appropriate assessments, review multiple factors when determining special education eligibility, and use assessment accommodations to ensure that multilingual and EL students are neither over- nor under-identified with disabilities and to provide needed and appropriate interventions.⁹

The program incorporates the *California Dyslexia Guidelines*¹⁰ through literacy coursework and supervised field experiences that include the definition of dyslexia and its characteristics; screening and diagnostic assessment to determine literacy profiles and the risk for dyslexia and other potential reading and writing difficulties or disabilities; and effective approaches for teaching and adapting/differentiating instruction for students at risk for and with dyslexia and other literacy-related disabilities. Candidates learn that guiding principles for educating students at risk for and with dyslexia and other literacy-related disabilities are anchored in valid assessment and instructional practices that are evidence based and that incorporate structured literacy (i.e., instruction that is comprehensive, systematic, explicit, cumulative, and multimodal and that includes phonology, orthography, phonics, morphology, syntax, and semantics, as needed) along with other cognitive and perceptual supports.

⁹ See the California Department of Education 2019 publication, [California Practitioners Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities for additional information](#).

¹⁰ See [California Education Code 44259\(b\)\(4\)](#)

7g. Integrated and Designated English Language Development

Coursework and supervised field experiences emphasize that ELD should be integrated into ELA and all other content instruction and build on students' cultural and linguistic assets. The program also emphasizes that comprehensive ELD includes both integrated and designated ELD and is part of Tier 1 instruction. Candidates learn how integrated and designated ELD are related, building into and from one another, and how designated ELD should be taught in connection with (rather than isolated from) content areas and topics. Through coursework and supervised field experiences, candidates learn to provide integrated ELD in which English learner students are taught to use and understand English to access and make meaning of academic content throughout the school day and across disciplines. Candidates learn to use the ELA/literacy standards (or other content standards) and ELD standards in tandem¹¹ to plan instruction that advances English learner students' academic and language development, strengthening students' abilities to use academic English as they simultaneously learn content. The program teaches candidates to design instruction that is appropriate for English learner students' literacy profiles, levels of English language proficiency, and prior educational experiences. Candidates also learn to design instruction that develops students' abilities to use English purposefully, interact in meaningful ways, and understand how English works. To the extent possible, the program provides supervised field experiences for candidates that include English learner students and recently reclassified English learner students.

Through the program, candidates learn that designated ELD is a part of the regular school day in which English learner students are taught English language skills critical for engaging in grade-level content learning. Candidates learn that designated ELD instruction is tailored to students' proficiency on the English language development continuum, based on the ELD standards. Candidates also learn to use the ELD standards as the focus of instruction in ways that support content area instruction, building into and from specific topics of study. Through the program, candidates learn the importance of coordinating with classroom teachers and other specialists and supporting classroom instruction so that English learner students with disabilities receive comprehensive ELD instruction.

7h. Literacy Teaching Performance Expectations and Supervised Clinical Practice

The program teaches all elements of the Literacy Teaching Performance Expectations and provides instruction, practice, and informal feedback and self-assessment focused on the knowledge, skills, and abilities required by any required local and/or state literacy performance assessments. Supervised, guided practice in clinical settings¹² provides opportunities for candidates to apply what they have learned and to gain feedback on how to improve and/or develop their practice to meet the learning needs of their students.

¹¹ See [California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 11300\(a, c\)](#).

¹² See Preliminary [Education Specialist Credential Program Standard 2: Preparing Candidates to Master the Teaching Performance Expectations and Program Standard 3: Clinical Practice](#) for additional details.