

## Proposed Preliminary PK-3 Early Childhood Education (ECE) Specialist Instruction Credential

### Program Standard 7: Effective Literacy Instruction in PK-3 Settings

The credential program's coursework and supervised field experiences encompass the study of effective means of teaching literacy to young children across all content areas<sup>1 2</sup> based on California's State Board of Education (SBE)-adopted [English Language Arts \(ELA\) and Literacy Standards](#), [English Language Development \(ELD\) Standards](#), and [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 children's learning across all themes and how progress in the other themes supports progress in the foundational skills. Through the integration of literacy coursework and supervised clinical practice, candidates learn that children's instruction in each of the themes is essential and should occur concurrently (rather than sequentially), with emphasis based on the children's age or grade-level standards as appropriate. 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,<sup>3</sup> 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 children's age, grade, and prior literacy development. Candidates also learn to provide literacy instruction that is responsive to children's linguistic, cognitive, and social strengths. Candidates learn the power of language (both oral and written) to understand and transform the world and to create and support socially just learning environments. The program builds candidates' understanding that high-quality literacy instruction integrates all

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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 communication technologies or 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.

<sup>3</sup> [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.

strands of the ELA/literacy standards, all parts of the ELD standards, all strands of the language and literacy and English-language development domains in the Preschool Learning Foundations, and other disciplinary standards to develop children’s capacities as effective and critical listeners, speakers, readers, and writers.

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 sustaining<sup>4</sup>
- b) [Multi-Tiered System of Support](#), including best first instruction; targeted, supplemental instruction for children whose literacy skills are not progressing as expected toward grade-level standards; and referrals for intensive intervention for children who have not benefited from supplemental support
- c) Instruction that is responsive to individual children’s 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 children’s literacy profiles, including English learner typologies, and to identify potential difficulties in reading and writing, including risk for dyslexia; and the possible need for referrals for additional assessment and intervention

Consistent with the *ELA/ELD Framework*, candidates learn instructional practices, through coursework and supervised field experiences, that are active, motivating, and engaging. 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 children’s autonomy in learning, including providing choices in reading and other literacy-related activities. Candidates also learn that instructional practices vary according to children’s

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<sup>4</sup> Culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and funds of knowledge are all practices 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.

age, learning profiles and goals, English language proficiency, and assessed strengths and needs and include, as appropriate, direct instruction, collaborative learning, and inquiry-based learning. Candidates also learn the value of guided self-assessment and goal setting for children's independence, motivation, and learning. Importantly, candidates learn the importance of creating literacy environments for young children that are nurturing and joyful and that encourage active, playful exploration and investigation and providing opportunities for children to engage freely in child-initiated, self-directed activities; work individually and in small groups; and take part in imaginative and dramatic play. The program also emphasizes the importance of families as the first, primary, and ongoing contributors to children's literacy development. Candidates 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 Skills<sup>5</sup>**

The PK-3 ECE Specialist Instruction credential program offers coursework and supervised field experiences that include evidence-based means of teaching the foundational skills to all children 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 and occurs in an environment that is print rich and child centered. Candidates learn to engage young children actively and deliberately with games, books, poetry, oral storytelling, and songs that draw their attention to print, the manipulation of sounds, and alphabet letters.

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.

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

The program also includes evidence-based means of teaching foundational skills to multilingual children/English learner students while they are simultaneously developing oral English language proficiency, and in some cases literacy skills in an additional language.<sup>6</sup> The program teaches candidates to plan foundational skills instruction based on children’s previous literacy experiences in their home languages and to differentiate instruction using guidance from the *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 settings<sup>7</sup> for children with reading, writing, or other literacy difficulties and disabilities, including children at risk for or with dyslexia. Candidates learn to monitor children’s progress based on their knowledge of critical milestones of foundational skill development and to adjust and differentiate instruction for children whose skills are not progressing as expected toward grade-level standards. They also learn to adapt instruction and provide accommodations and supplemental support to children who continue to experience difficulty and to collaborate with children’s families and guardians as well as with other teachers, specialists, and administrators from the school or district to initiate needed referrals for additional assessment and intensive intervention.

The program provides supervised, guided practice in clinical settings that allow candidates to provide comprehensive literacy instruction, including initial or supplemental foundational skills instruction at beginning levels of reading (i.e., instruction beyond the earliest years and before children have typically developed fluency in 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. The program teaches candidates ways to engage children in rich early literacy experiences. Candidates learn the value of reading aloud and strategies for modeling and assisting children in making predictions, retelling and reenacting, and responding to and generating questions about stories and other text. The program addresses literal and inferential comprehension with all children at all grades and in all disciplines, including making connections with prior knowledge and experiences. The program also teaches the importance of attending to higher order cognitive skills at all grades, such as reasoning, inferencing, perspective taking, and critical listening, speaking, reading, and writing across disciplines in ways that are appropriate for the age of the children. The program ensures that candidates understand that among the contributors to meaning making are language, including vocabulary

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<sup>6</sup> See updated [Bilingual Authorization Program Standards and new Bilingual Teaching Performance Expectations](#) for standards and expectations specific to multilingual programs.

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

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 children opportunities to interact with a range of print and digital, high-quality literary and informational texts that are developmentally appropriate and culturally and linguistically relevant and affirming as listeners, speakers, readers, and writers and to share their understandings, insights, and responses in collaboration with others. Through coursework and supervised field experiences, candidates learn to engage children in listening, reading, speaking, writing, and viewing closely to draw information 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 children's asset, 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 children learn, think, and express information, ideas, perspectives, and questions orally and in writing. Candidates also learn to provide young children with thoughtful and rich exposure to and experience with varied forms of language and to respond attentively to children's use of language. The program presents ways to create environments and frame interactions that foster oral and written language development for all children, including discipline-specific academic language. Candidates learn to express interest in and attend to children's verbalizations and expand and elaborate on their language, adding details or more complex sentence structures. The program focuses on instruction that values and leverages children's 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 children's language, including their knowledge of how language works. Candidates learn to support children's 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 children’s learning of complex sentence and text structures and emphasizes that children enrich their language as they listen, speak, read, and write; 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 individual children’s speaking, writing, and other communications; understanding of children’s 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 children learn to effectively express themselves as activity, play, 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 children in a range of interactions and collaborative conversations with diverse partners on grade-level topics and texts and to engage young children in extended conversations in which multiple conversational turns are taken. Candidates learn to help children identify effective expression in what they listen to, view, and read, as they examine the words, images, and organizational structure of written, oral, or visual text. Through the program, candidates learn to teach children 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 children 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 children’s 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 create writing-rich environments with instruction that carefully guides and supports children as they learn to write daily for various purposes, including informal writing. Candidates learn to model writing and engage children in responding to texts and experiences through dictation and writing that support learning and reflection across disciplines. Candidates learn that young children begin with drawings, marks, and scribbles that become strings of letters and phonetically spelled words and progress to conventional spellings and sentences. The program includes explicit instruction for children in transitional kindergarten and kindergarten in letter formation/ printing and related language conventions, such as capitalization and punctuation, in conjunction with applicable decoding skills.

Candidates learn to support children in grade one and beyond in the development of the organization, style, and mechanics of their writing. Additionally, candidates learn to teach children 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, information, and narration. Candidates learn the importance of supporting students to use keyboarding, technology, and multimedia, as appropriate, and the value of developing spelling and handwriting fluency in the writing process. Candidates also learn to engage children 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 individual children’s 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 to plan and implement instruction that maximizes children’s 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 children, particularly when the content relevance is clear, reflects and values children’s diverse experiences and cultures, and is responsive to their interests.

The program emphasizes the importance of full access to content instruction—including through print and digital texts and multimedia, discussions, experimentation, and hands-on explorations—for all children. The program teaches candidates to provide the supports needed based on children’s language proficiency levels or learning differences and addresses inclusive practices and co-teaching models. Candidates learn to foster new learning and provide choices that reflect and expand children’s interests; they engage children in learning experiences that connect to the worlds they know while enriching and extending those worlds. The program helps candidates build children’s understandings of 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 children 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 their age and development. The program also teaches wide and independent reading in knowledge building and literacy development. In addition, the program provides multiple opportunities for candidates learn how to promote digital literacy and the use of educational technology, including the ability to find, evaluate, use, share, analyze, create, and communicate digital resources safely and responsibly, and to foster digital citizenship<sup>8</sup> in ways that are appropriate

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

for children’s age and development. 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 Children 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 children and to work effectively within co-teaching and inclusion models. The program teaches candidates to understand their responsibility for providing initial and supplemental instruction for children. Candidates learn and practice how to collaborate with families and guardians as well as with other teachers, specialists, and administrators from the school or district to gain additional assessment and instructional support for children. The program also teaches candidates to understand the distinction between the characteristics of emerging bi/multilingualism and the range of learning disabilities. Candidates learn the importance of accurate identification (neither over- nor under-identification) of multilingual and English learner students with disabilities and to seek support from language development and disability education specialists to initiate appropriate referrals and interventions.<sup>9</sup>

The program incorporates the *California Dyslexia Guidelines*<sup>10</sup> through literacy coursework and, where practicable, supervised field experiences that include the definition of dyslexia and its characteristics; screening 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 children at risk for and with dyslexia and other literacy-related disabilities. Candidates learn that guiding principles for educating children 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.

## **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 children’s 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

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<sup>9</sup> See [California Practitioners’ Guide for Educating English Learners with Disabilities](#) for additional information.

<sup>10</sup> See [California Education Code 44259\(b\)\(4\)](#).



supervised field experiences, candidates learn to provide integrated ELD in which children identified as 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. All candidates learn to use the ELA/literacy standards, Preschool Learning Foundations, (or other content standards), and ELD standards in tandem<sup>11</sup> to plan instruction that advances English learner students' academic and language development, strengthening their abilities to use academic English as they simultaneously learn content. The program teaches candidates to design instruction that is appropriate for children's literacy profiles, levels of English language proficiency, and prior educational experiences. Candidates also learn to design instruction that develops children's abilities to use English purposefully, interact in meaningful ways, and understand how English works.

The program also prepares candidates to provide designated ELD as 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 children's 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 designated ELD in ways that support content instruction, building into and from specific topics of study. To the extent possible, the program provides supervised field experiences for candidates that include English learner students and recently reclassified English learner students.

## **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 settings<sup>12</sup> 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 children.

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

<sup>12</sup> See proposed Preliminary PK-3 ECE Specialist Credential Program Standard 2: Preparing Candidates towards Mastery of the PK-3 ECE Specialist Teaching Performance Expectations and Program Standard 3: Clinical Practice: Opportunities to Learn and to Practice, for additional details.