



## Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria

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**Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**  
135 Santilli Highway, Everett, MA 02149  
Phone 781-338-3000 TTY: N.E.T. Relay 800-439-2370  
[www.doe.mass.edu](http://www.doe.mass.edu)

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## Introduction

### Purpose of the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria

The Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria support Sponsoring Organizations (SOs) to develop teacher candidates' content fluency in early literacy and set expectations for providing opportunities for application of early literacy knowledge in the classroom setting. Research indicates that teachers' content fluency in early literacy has a direct impact on student achievement in reading and writing, which has implications for life-long outcomes (Porter et al, 2023). The criteria promote deeper learning of early literacy content knowledge for teacher candidates through rich practice and feedback, moving beyond the functional level of content knowledge assessed by the MTEL to ensure fluency in its application to teaching and learning, where the intersection of content knowledge and pedagogical skill is central.

*As part of the program approval process for SOs, providers authorized to endorse candidates for licensure in Early Education, Elementary, Moderate Disabilities PK-8 and Moderate Disabilities PK-2<sup>1</sup> must demonstrate alignment to these program criteria (in addition to alignment to the specific Subject Matter Knowledge Guidelines of each licensure role and to the broader Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval for all licensure roles) starting in SY2024 - 2025.*

### Background and Context of Mass Literacy and the Early Literacy Program Criteria

Evidence-based early literacy instruction, provided within schools and classrooms that are culturally and linguistically sustaining, will put our youngest students on a path toward literacy for life. In the Massachusetts school system, some of our students receive the instruction and support they need to develop a strong foundation for literacy, while others do not. According to the Nation's Report Card, as of 2022, only 43% of 4th graders in Massachusetts scored at or above proficiency on NAEP, and the reading proficiency levels for Black and Latino or Hispanic students were less than half that for White students. These statistics reflect not student effort or ability, but opportunity and support to learn. DESE is committed to ensuring equitable access to learning across Massachusetts from educator preparation to PK–12 classrooms.

In 2019, DESE launched the Mass Literacy initiative and its centerpiece, the Mass Literacy Guide. The goal of Mass Literacy is to support pre-service and in-service educators in grades PK–3 to gain deep knowledge of literacy development and to skillfully implement evidence-based, inclusive, culturally and linguistically sustaining practices to create meaningful learning experiences that are real-world, relevant, and interactive. In subsequent years, the Center for Instructional Support revised the Guide to amplify and highlight culturally sustaining practice, adding resources and considerations for implementing evidence-based early literacy in a culturally sustaining way. In 2023, DESE partnered with English Learner

<sup>1</sup> In June 2023, the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved changes to the Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval Regulations. The changes included a new grade span, PK-2, for the Moderate Disabilities license. Preparation programs for this new license are included in the *Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria*, as the grade span falls within the articulated expectation that Moderate Disabilities PK-8 teachers are well prepared in evidence-based early literacy instruction.

<sup>2</sup> DESE uses the term “bidialectal” to refer to students who speak more than one dialect of the same language and draws from the precise definition of dialect used by linguists: “a version of a language spoken by a group of people distinguished by characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, and/or geographic region” (Washington, 2021).

Success Forum to ensure that the unique assets and needs of multilingual and bidialectal<sup>1</sup> learners are centered throughout the resource. This work is ongoing and expected to be completed in 2024. The guide is a living resource, updated regularly to reflect new learnings.

In line with the mission of Mass Literacy, it is critical that prospective teachers learn evidence-based early literacy practices and how they can be enacted in culturally and linguistically sustaining ways. According to [data collected in 2020](#), the extent to which new teachers were learning evidence-based early literacy practices in Massachusetts varied widely. **In 2021, DESE began the development of program approval criteria that would articulate the expectation that prospective teachers in Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 licensure programs learn evidence-based early literacy practices and how they can be enacted in culturally and linguistically sustaining ways.** DESE then set the following goal:

*By school year 2024-2025, all Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 teacher candidates in Massachusetts are prepared, through coursework and opportunities for practice and high-quality feedback, in evidence-based early literacy instruction as outlined in the Mass Literacy Guide.*

According to the U.S. Department of Education, evidence-based instruction is defined as “the practices or programs that have evidence to show that they are effective at producing results and improving outcomes when implemented as supported by valid and reliable research” (U.S. Department of Education, Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). DESE believes that the strongest evidence-based instructional practices have evidence of efficacy across diverse populations of students, including students from historically underserved groups and communities. Furthermore, when research has conclusively shown that instructional practices do not serve students, teachers should be aware of the research base and understand why practices have been discredited. All teachers need to be critical consumers and thinkers and know how to navigate ongoing research in the field of education in order to ensure effective literacy instruction.

As articulated in the [Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval](#), effective educators in Massachusetts are those who demonstrate culturally and linguistically sustaining classroom and school practices that support students to thrive by creating affirming environments where students have a sense of belonging, engage in deeper learning, and are held to high expectations with targeted support ([DESE Educational Vision, 2023](#)). The Guidelines set the expectation that all aspiring educators be prepared in these evidence-based practices that well serve all students in Massachusetts, particularly those from systemically underserved groups and communities, such that they will have equitable opportunities to excel in all content areas across all grades. In alignment with these expectations, coursework and field-based experiences across teacher preparation programs should introduce all teacher candidates to the importance of anti-bias and culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction, including research and effective practices for multilingual and bidialectal learners. An understanding of the tenets and research of culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy will serve as the foundation for building the literacy-specific culturally and linguistically sustaining practices and skills outlined in this document throughout an Elementary, Early Childhood, or Moderate Disabilities PK-8/PK-2 teacher candidate’s program of study.

These criteria reflect the following key beliefs about effective early literacy instruction:

1. Effective teachers appreciate, honor, and sustain students' home languages, cultures, and identities, and leverage funds of knowledge to support their individualized learning and success.
2. Foundational skills (including print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics, decoding, encoding, and fluency) and oral language skills contribute to the development of fluent reading and writing. These skills are a necessary foundation to reach the ultimate goal of literacy: being able to comprehend texts, write, and effectively communicate in order to fully participate in our society.
3. Effective early literacy instruction requires explicit, systematic, and contextualized teaching that builds knowledge and skills over time and includes opportunities for meaningful practice across different settings.
4. Effective early literacy instruction draws on current research about play-based learning; it is joyful, meaningful, active, iterative, and social.

## Expectations for Programs and Candidates

The expectations for programs and candidates outlined in this document are specific to candidates' content knowledge and pedagogical skills required for teaching early literacy in grades PK-3. They are part of the broader expectations necessary for teacher preparedness in any one of the three licensure roles, as outlined in the Professional Standards for Teachers (PSTs) and the Subject Matter Knowledge Guidelines (SMKs). **They are not inclusive of the breadth of knowledge and skills needed for licensure in Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8.** Because of this focus on evidence-based early literacy teaching and learning, the expectations do *not* explicitly include:

- content-agnostic pedagogy or skills (e.g., Universal Design for Learning, the frameworks for Social Emotional Learning (SEL)) that are central to effective practice across content areas; or
- the preparation that pre-service teachers in all three licensure roles, but especially Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 educators, need in order to well-support students with disabilities.

Furthermore, the criteria are not prescriptive of **how** higher education faculty meet the expectations; rather, they can be embedded in a number of courses or field placement experiences. Similarly, the criteria are not prescriptive of how classroom teachers meet the expectations as there is no one program or curriculum that can adequately address all aspects of good early literacy instruction. These criteria are a baseline for the content knowledge and skills needed to be an effective teacher of early literacy on day one, developed with the understanding that **effective teachers are lifelong learners who believe research into effective practices is ongoing and dynamic.**

## Connections to Professional Standards for Teaching (PST) Guidelines

The structure of the criteria mirrors the structure of the PSTs, which define the pedagogical and other professional knowledge and skills required of all teachers, as well as the level of practice that candidates should demonstrate by the time they complete their teacher preparation program and are endorsed for licensure. **The early literacy program criteria are thereby organized into the following practice levels: Introduction, Practice, and Demonstrate.**

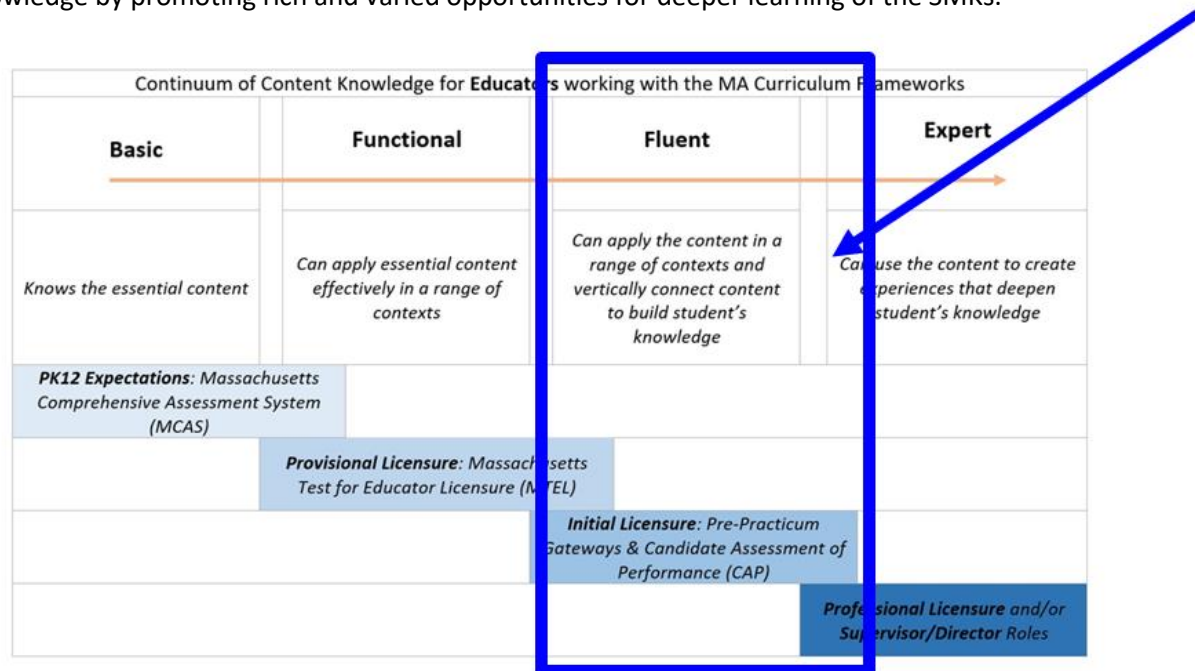
The table below defines each level of practice and what it means for teacher candidates during their preparation:

Level of Practice	Expectations for Candidates
Introduction	Candidates show understanding through coursework and/or in field-based experiences.
Practice	Candidates have opportunities to practice, to be observed, and to receive feedback through coursework and/or in field-based experiences.  <i>NOTE: Practice can happen in coursework through a combination of simulations, rehearsals, or role-play; it is not limited to field-based experiences.</i>
Demonstrate	Candidates consistently demonstrate competency through coursework and in field-based experiences as measured by the teacher performance assessment.

### Connections to Subject Matter Knowledge (SMK) Guidelines

Students in Massachusetts must meet rigorous academic standards, which are outlined in the [Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks](#). In support of promoting strong content knowledge, the [SMK Guidelines](#) set forth the content knowledge expectations for educator licensure in Massachusetts.

The criteria are designed to move teacher candidates from basic literacy content knowledge, as represented in Massachusetts' ELA Curriculum Frameworks, through functional to fluent content knowledge by promoting rich and varied opportunities for deeper learning of the SMKs.



## Navigating the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria: A Note about Hyperlinks

### *Hyperlinks to the Mass Literacy Guide*

The Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria closely align and reflect the principles and research of effective, evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining early literacy instruction outlined in the [Mass Literacy Guide](#). **Whenever the guide is referenced, the expectations will link to the specific subsite of the Mass Literacy Guide that is most relevant to that particular criterion.**

### *Hyperlinks to Definitions of Key Terms*

Definitions for key terms used in this document are located in [Appendix A: Glossary of Terms](#). Throughout the criteria, **whenever a term is used for the first time, it will be underlined and hyperlink to the corresponding definition in the glossary.**

### *Hyperlinks to Resources and Research*

The resources and research base that informs these criteria is included as a curated list in [Appendix F: Research and Resources Aligned to the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria and Mass Literacy](#). The appendix reflects the essential knowledge that Elementary, Early Childhood, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 candidates need in order to implement evidence-based early literacy practices. The curated list is dynamic, reflective of input from stakeholders and literacy experts, and is fully aligned with the guiding principles of Mass Literacy. **Individual criteria include hyperlinks to corresponding, relevant studies, resources, and authors in Appendix F.**

## Part I. Literacy Foundations Coursework

### A. Core Principles of Intentional and Equitable Literacy Instruction

In their coursework, candidates have opportunities for learning in each of these basic principles of effective literacy instruction. This will ensure that candidates have a solid foundation for literacy instruction that is culturally and linguistically sustaining, informed by research, and interactive and engaging for young learners.

1. Research on the development of skilled reading and writing	
Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate the ability to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <a href="#">Frameworks</a> for understanding the development of literacy</li> <li>b. <a href="#">Frameworks</a> for understanding the interrelatedness of literacy skills</li> <li>c. The factors that impact skilled reading and writing, including physical ability (e.g., vision, hearing, fine motor skills), language, culture, personal identity, motivation, and engagement</li> <li>d. The basic principles of how the brain learns to read and write as demonstrated through neuroscientific <a href="#">research</a></li> <li>e. The current definition and characteristics of students diagnosed or at risk of reading difficulties, learning disabilities that impact literacy development, and <a href="#">dyslexia</a> as described in the <a href="#">Massachusetts Dyslexia Guidelines</a> and the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></li> <li>f. The <a href="#">research</a> on the importance of a play approach in early literacy instruction</li> </ul>	<p>(Application of the frameworks and research is embedded throughout the expectations)</p>



## 2. The development of language and literacy in students who speak multiple languages and/or dialects of English

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate <sup>3</sup> the ability to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The benefits of multilingualism and bidialectalism</li> <li>b. The <a href="#">research</a> on <a href="#">cross-linguistic transfer</a> and the role of <a href="#">translanguaging</a> in leveraging students' linguistic assets to support learning</li> <li>c. The factors that can affect the development of language and emergent literacy skills of English language and/or home language proficiency, such as the differences in concepts of print among languages and/or dialects and the connections between a student's home language and General American English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Plan appropriate entry points for learners of all language backgrounds to grade-level literacy instruction and activities</li> <li>e. Build on students' background knowledge of speech and language</li> <li>f. Provide opportunities for translanguaging throughout instruction</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup>Teacher candidates may "[practice](#)" the application of content knowledge in coursework through role play, rehearsals, simulations, etc, or in field-based experiences. Teacher candidates "[demonstrate](#)" skills in coursework, [pre-practicum](#), and [practicum](#) placements that they are expected to be prepared to be able to do on day one in the licensure role. **In places in this document where "practice" and "demonstrate" are grouped together, teacher candidates' coursework and field-based experiences provide learning experiences that build a teacher candidate's skill over the course of the program, leading to demonstration of "fluent" content knowledge by program completion.**

### 3. Instructional Materials

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates practice:	Candidates demonstrate the ability to:
<p>a. The <a href="#">research</a> on the importance of <a href="#">high-quality instructional materials</a></p> <p>b. The concept of and process for internalizing <a href="#">curricular materials</a></p> <p>c. The <a href="#">research</a> on culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy and practices in early literacy development as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></p> <p>d. The <a href="#">research</a> base and instructional purpose of different <a href="#">types of text</a> (e.g., decodable, complex, text sets), as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a> and “<a href="#">The Four Shifts</a>”</p>	<p>e. Critically analyzing instructional materials and discerning whether there is a need to adjust and/or adapt instructional materials or select additional instructional materials to create evidence-based early literacy learning experiences that are rigorous, culturally and linguistically sustaining, and engaging</p> <p>f.</p>	<p>g. Plan evidence-based, inclusive, and culturally sustaining literacy instruction that includes opportunities for students to create meaningful, relevant connections rooted in the local context</p> <p>h. Identify necessary supplemental resources and/or tiered supports to provide all students access to grade-level literacy instruction.</p> <p>i.</p>

### 4. Engaging Instruction

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate the ability to:
<p>a. The <a href="#">research</a> on cultivating student engagement in literacy instruction</p>	<p>b. Implement evidence-based strategies for cultivating student engagement that align to the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a>, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Helping students understand the functions of print and identifying different genres, text types, and topics of interest</li> <li>● Identifying opportunities for students to connect and relate early literacy content to students’ communities and everyday lives</li> <li>● Identifying opportunities for playful learning (e.g., guided play, sociodramatic play, language play) that support literacy development</li> <li>● Providing opportunities for students to identify as successful readers and writers</li> <li>● Allowing students to have reading choices</li> <li>● Designing inclusive and engaging language-rich learning environments</li> </ul>

## 5. Assessments and Data-based Decision Making

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates practice:	Candidates demonstrate the ability to:
<p>a. A variety of formal and informal evidence-based <u>assessments</u> for measuring and monitoring students' early literacy development in each of the subskills of reading (e.g., decoding, <u>sight word</u> recognition, phonological awareness, fluency, vocabulary, background knowledge, language comprehension, and reading comprehension) and writing (e.g., handwriting, spelling, conventions, craft, process)</p> <p>b. The specific considerations in administering assessments in General American English for students of all language backgrounds as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></p> <p>c. The importance and appropriate use of reliable and valid assessments administered in a culturally and linguistically sustaining way for screening, diagnostic, and progress monitoring purposes to make decisions about student intervention/instruction as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></p> <p>d. The concept of and <u>research</u> base for a <u>multi-tiered system of support (MTSS)</u> structure for literacy instruction</p> <p>e. The appropriate role of MTSS and evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining tiers of instruction in supporting students who are currently or at risk of experiencing reading or writing difficulties</p>	<p>f. Critically analyzing assessments</p> <p>g. Interpreting the data in view of specific student groups and instruction to make equity-driven data-based decisions, including determining the extent to which difficulties in developing word-level reading and spelling skills are related to language acquisition</p> <p>h. Communicating assessment results with a variety of stakeholders, including families to support and empower home-school partnerships that are culturally and linguistically sustaining</p> <p>i. Using student data to create intentional instruction plans in collaboration with a multidisciplinary team including ESL/Bilingual educators and reading specialists when applicable</p>	<p>j. Interpret data from at least one valid and reliable early literacy screening assessment, such as those <u>approved by DESE</u>, to identify students at risk of reading difficulties, learning disabilities, and dyslexia</p> <p>k. Determine progress and ability in each of the subskills of reading</p> <p>l. Make connections to practice across subtests, such as the ability to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze students' oral reading to gain insight into students' reading abilities</li> <li>Analyze writing samples in order to make adjustments to practice (ex: analysis of students' spelling to gain insight into students' phonemic awareness, decoding, and encoding abilities)</li> </ul> <p>m. Make data-based decisions for grouping students and designing small group instruction, as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></p> <p>n. Monitor student growth using valid progress monitoring approaches as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></p>

## B. Language Comprehension

In their coursework, candidates have opportunities to gain the content knowledge and skills needed to effectively support students' development of language comprehension, with a clear understanding of the role of a student's native oral language in literacy development and the importance of vocabulary in effective literacy instruction.

1. Research on the Development of Language Comprehension	
Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The <a href="#">research</a> on the interrelationships between oral language and literacy development (i.e., how speaking and listening skills interact with reading and writing skills) and the impact of language development on later literacy success</li> <li>b. The components of language comprehension, e.g. <a href="#">vocabulary</a>, <a href="#">syntax and grammar</a>, <a href="#">higher level language skills</a>, and <a href="#">background knowledge</a></li> <li>c. The language development and learning of students who speak multiple languages and/or dialects of English</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Evidence-based practices that create a language-rich and culturally and linguistically sustaining environment in order to promote oral language development and language comprehension growth as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></li> <li>e. Evidence-based instructional strategies and adaptations that effectively support the development of oral language for multilingual and/or bidialectal students as <a href="#">outlined in the Mass Literacy Guide</a> and the <a href="#">CGCS Framework for Foundational Skills Instruction</a></li> </ul>

## 2. Vocabulary

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension and academic success</li> <li>b. The role of morphology (General American English word roots and their origins as well as common English affixes and their meanings) in reading and spelling development as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></li> <li>c. The use of incidental and intentional social interactions, interactive read-alouds, songs, centers, and play to build oral language and vocabulary development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Evidence-based instructional activities that support all students' vocabulary growth and understanding of morphology, as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a>, including:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Explicit vocabulary instruction embedded in meaningful contexts (reading, writing, and speaking opportunities)</li> <li>ii. Selection of tier two vocabulary for focused instruction</li> <li>iii. Play-based learning opportunities for learning and applying vocabulary</li> </ul> </li> <li>e. Evidence-based instructional strategies and adaptations that effectively support the development of vocabulary for multilingual and/or bidialectal students as <a href="#">outlined in the Mass Literacy Guide</a> and the <a href="#">CGCS Framework for Foundational Skills Instruction</a></li> </ul>

## C. Foundational Skills

In their coursework, candidates have opportunities to gain the content knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach the foundational skills of reading, rooted in the understanding that these foundational skills are necessary for fluent and successful reading in later grades.

1. Research on the Development of Skilled Word Reading	
Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate the ability to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The correlations established in <a href="#">research</a> between foundational reading skills and later academic performance</li> <li>b. The model of gradually releasing responsibility when introducing new content in foundational skills</li> <li>c. Considerations for allocating instructional time for all the foundational skills components in the early grades</li> </ul>	<p>(Application is embedded throughout the Foundational Skills section as practice and demonstration of effective instruction of the various subskills)</p>
2. Phonological Awareness Instruction	
Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The role of phonological awareness in reading development in alphabetic writing systems</li> <li>b. The factors that impact students' development of phonological awareness, such as variability in students' phonological awareness knowledge, multilingualism, bidialectalism, and/or neurodiversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Evidence-based instructional strategies for explicit, systematic instruction of phonological awareness, such as those outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a>, including opportunities for students to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Focus attention on the sounds of language (e.g., through songs, rhymes, chants, poems)</li> <li>ii. Combine phoneme-level instruction with alphabet knowledge</li> <li>iii. Segment and blend</li> <li>iv. Map symbols to sounds through invented spelling and writing for sound in PK-1</li> </ul> </li> <li>d. Linguistically sustaining adaptations to phonological awareness instruction that support the growth and development of multilingual and/or bidialectal students, such as contextualized practice or comparative study of phonemes in the student's home language as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></li> </ul>

### 3. Phonics and Decoding Instruction

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The phoneme-grapheme correspondences of the English language and their place and manner of articulation</li> <li>b. The role of phonics knowledge, decoding skills, and sight word knowledge in reading development</li> <li>c. The connection between automaticity of decoding and encoding skills and fluent reading and writing</li> <li>d. Recommended progression(s) of phonics instruction based on complexity and utility of spelling patterns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Evidence-based strategies for explicit and systematic phonics and decoding instruction, such as those outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a>, including               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Instructional activities for alphabetic knowledge such as <a href="#">Elkonin boxes</a> and games, songs, or hands-on materials that help students learn letter sounds</li> <li>ii. Routines that help students develop automatic recognition of high-frequency words by mapping the words' sounds, spelling, and meaning</li> <li>iii. Instruction in multisyllabic words and morphology</li> <li>iv. Instructional strategies for irregularly spelled high-frequency words</li> </ul> </li> <li>f. The use of text and activities purposefully for whole- and small-group instruction, based on student needs, interests, and identities, to promote transfer of phonics and decoding skills</li> <li>g. Skillful adaptations to phonics and decoding instruction that support the growth and development of multilingual and/or bidialectal students, such as cross-linguistic analysis and making explicit connections between code-learning and meaning-making, as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></li> </ul>

4. Encoding Instruction	
Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The concept of spelling as a complex cognitive process that is related to language, phonics, and writing rather than an exclusive process of rote memorization</li> <li>b. The typical developmental <a href="#">progression of spelling</a> and current research on spelling development for multilingual and bidialectal learners</li> <li>c. The need to teach encoding in connection with phonics, including explicit and systematic phonics instruction of the 250 graphemes used to represent the 42-44 phonemes of the English language and the patterns and rules that inform when to use different graphemes depending on the word's language of origin, meaning, or sound structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. The ability to create active and meaningful practice opportunities for encoding, such as opportunities for students to play spelling games, practice using invented spelling, and transfer and apply the phonics they are learning to their writing</li> <li>e. The ability to implement activities and strategies that support the development of encoding skills for multilingual and bidialectal learners, such as oral language strengthener exercises and explicitly connecting spelling to meaning-making</li> </ul>
5. Fluency	
Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The role of fluency (rate, prosody, and accuracy) in reading development</li> <li>b. The factors and processes influencing fluency development, including development of automatic word recognition that occurs through repeatedly encountering, decoding, and understanding a word, as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Evidence-based instructional activities for fluency, such as repeated readings with feedback, readers' theater, and echo reading</li> <li>d. Evidence-based instructional strategies and modifications that effectively support the development of fluency for multilingual and bidialectal students, such as exercises that also attend to syntactic comprehension or explicitly teach intonation</li> </ul>



## D. Reading Comprehension

In their coursework, candidates have opportunities to gain the content knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach the competencies in the [MA ELA Frameworks](#) through grade-level appropriate practices that will promote comprehension, knowledge building, and independent reading.

1. Research on the Development of Reading Comprehension	
Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate the ability to:
<p>a. The factors that impact development of reading comprehension, such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Fluent word reading</a> (e.g., Phonological awareness, Phonics and decoding, Advanced phonics, Automatic word recognition)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Language comprehension</a> (e.g., Vocabulary and morphology, Knowledge, Syntax and grammar, Higher-level language skills)</li> <li>• Motivation and engagement</li> <li>• Executive Functioning</li> <li>• Use of comprehension strategies</li> <li>• Sociocultural considerations, including pragmatics</li> </ul>	<p>(Application is embedded throughout the Reading Comprehension section as practice and demonstration of effective instruction of the various subskills )</p>

## 2. The Role of Knowledge Building

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
a. The <u>role</u> of both conceptual and cultural knowledge in reading comprehension	b. The ability to build students' knowledge as outlined in the <u>Mass Literacy</u> Guide and the <u>MA ELA Frameworks</u> , including the use of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informational read-aloud that support students' growing understanding of a topic</li> <li>Text sets that allow students to engage with a varied and coherent body of texts that work together to build broad and deep knowledge of the world</li> <li>Explicit instruction of culturally-bound concepts encountered in texts</li> <li>Routines and strategies that promote curiosity, inquiry, and discussion about a topic of study</li> <li>Opportunities to practice reading independently</li> </ol>

## 3. The Role of Language and Literacy Knowledge

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
[depending on determination of prior knowledge <sup>4</sup> ] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Reading Standards for Literature and Informational Text outlined in the <u>MA English Language Arts and Literacy Frameworks</u></li> <li>Literacy knowledge and skills assessed in <u>Communications and Literacy Skills MTEL</u>, including the features and structures of General American English and the features and structures of various genres of text</li> <li>The Key Language Uses outlined in <u>WIDA ELD Standards</u> Framework</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explicit instruction on the features and structures of language (ex: expanded noun groups, use of conjunctions) to support comprehension at the sentence level, including an asset-based cross-linguistic comparison of language structures in General American English with home language and/or language varieties</li> <li>Explicit instruction on the purposes (i.e., inform, narrate, explain, and argue) of text</li> <li>Explicit instruction on the structures (i.e., the elements of a narrative text, common structures of informational texts) of different texts</li> <li>The ability to provide students with opportunities to use their knowledge of language and text features and structures to comprehend complex texts as outlined in the <u>Mass Literacy Guide</u></li> </ol>

<sup>4</sup> In cases where the foundational knowledge needed to practice and demonstrate effective instruction is part of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for PK-12 public schools or, in some cases, part of the generalized curriculum of institutions of higher learning, explicit and direct instruction of this content may not be necessary in educator preparation programs

#### 4. The Role of Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Complex Texts

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates practice:	Candidates demonstrate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <u>Research</u> on the importance of high expectations and engaging all students with grade-level complex texts</li> <li>b. The role of appropriate, temporary, individualized scaffolds in instruction of complex texts</li> <li>c. The importance of and <u>research</u> on texts that affirm students' identities as well as texts that introduce students to diverse perspectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. The ability to construct, assess, and modify tasks and questions connected to complex texts to ensure that they align to grade-level standards and are culturally and <u>linguistically responsive</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. The ability to provide opportunities for all students to engage with complex, relevant texts that represent multiple perspectives and diverse life experiences across genres and content areas as outlined in the <u>Mass Literacy Guide</u> and the <u>MA ELA Frameworks</u></li> <li>f. The ability to provide students with opportunities to analyze and respond to complex texts in order to develop <u>critical literacy</u></li> </ul>

#### 5. Instructional Strategies for Reading Comprehension

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The purpose and <u>benefits</u> of <u>dialogic reading</u> and <u>active discussions</u> during read-alouds as outlined in the <u>Mass Literacy Guide</u></li> <li>b. The <u>research</u> on <u>close reading</u> strategies and analyzing a text to make meaning</li> <li>c. The process of gradually shifting responsibility for selecting and using reading strategies to students</li> <li>d. The <u>role</u> of text-based discussions in developing reading comprehension as outlined in the <u>Mass Literacy Guide</u></li> <li>e. The research on developing language and literacy skills in content area instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. Intentional and planned read-alouds that use evidence-based strategies, such as text talk or scaffolded rereads, in order to promote students' development of inferential thinking</li> <li>g. The ability to facilitate text-based discussions that provide brief, explicit instruction on some aspect of the text or model a comprehension strategy before and/or while reading</li> <li>h. Routines for helping students apply reading strategies</li> <li>i. Evidence-based instructional practices and modifications that effectively support the development of metacognitive strategies for all students, such as explicitly breaking down the language demands and cultural nuances of making an inference</li> <li>j. Effective instructional practices that will guide students through high-quality <u>discourse</u> about texts, outlined in the <u>Mass Literacy Guide</u>, including the ability to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Plan meaningful analysis and discussion of texts at the discourse, sentence, and phrase/word level</li> <li>ii. Develop higher-order discussion questions that are tied to grade-level standards and reflect the reader's ability and grade-level</li> <li>iii. Ask follow-up questions that facilitate discussion and higher-level thinking</li> <li>iv. Structure lessons to encourage student-led discussions and peer-to-peer interactions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## 6. Instructional Strategies for Reading Comprehension

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>k. The purpose and <u>benefits</u> of <u>dialogic reading</u> and <u>active discussions</u> during read-alouds as outlined in the <u>Mass Literacy Guide</u></li> <li>l. The <u>research</u> on <u>close reading</u> strategies and analyzing a text to make meaning</li> <li>m. The process of gradually shifting responsibility for selecting and using reading strategies to students</li> <li>n. The <u>role</u> of text-based discussions in developing reading comprehension as outlined in the <u>Mass Literacy Guide</u></li> <li>o. The research on developing language and literacy skills in content area instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>p. Intentional and planned read-alouds that use evidence-based strategies, such as text talk or scaffolded rereads, in order to promote students' development of inferential thinking</li> <li>q. The ability to facilitate text-based discussions that provide brief, explicit instruction on some aspect of the text or model a comprehension strategy before and/or while reading</li> <li>r. Routines for helping students apply reading strategies</li> <li>s. Evidence-based instructional practices and modifications that effectively support the development of metacognitive strategies for all students, such as explicitly breaking down the language demands and cultural nuances of making an inference</li> <li>t. Effective instructional practices that will guide students through high-quality <u>discourse</u> about texts, outlined in the <u>Mass Literacy Guide</u>, including the ability to               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>v. Plan meaningful analysis and discussion of texts at the discourse, sentence, and phase/word level</li> <li>vi. Develop higher-order discussion questions that are tied to grade-level standards and reflect the reader's ability and grade-level</li> <li>vii. Ask follow-up questions that facilitate discussion and higher-level thinking</li> <li>viii. Structure lessons to encourage student-led discussions and peer-to-peer interactions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## E. Writing

In their coursework, candidates have opportunities to gain the content knowledge needed to effectively teach the skills in the [MA ELA Frameworks](#) through playful, culturally and linguistically sustaining, grade-level appropriate practices that will promote an awareness of the purposes of writing and the development of writing fluency.

1. Research on the Development of Writing Skills		
Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate the ability to:	
<div>a. Frameworks for understanding early writing and the development of early writing skills, including fine motor development and development of oracy skills</div> <div>b. The relationship between writing and the retention of content knowledge, improved reading comprehension, and gains in oral language skills</div>	(Application is embedded throughout the Writing section as practice and demonstration of effective instruction of the various subskills )	
2. Handwriting		
Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates practice:	Candidates demonstrate:
<div>a. Research on effective handwriting instruction, including</div> <div><div>i. The connection between handwriting and letter recognition</div><div>ii. The value of playful activities that support the development of shapes, letter, and word formation</div><div>iii. The impact of handwriting on writing fluency</div></div>	<div>b. Explicit, systematic instruction in letter formation, word spacing, posture, and pencil grip for both left and right-handedness, including activities to support fine motor development</div>	<div>c. Application of the research on effective handwriting instruction in a classroom setting <i>when practicum placements allow</i> <sup>5</sup></div>

<sup>5</sup> For Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 candidates whose caseloads during practicum placements do not allow for instruction in handwriting, these candidates may not be able to demonstrate effective handwriting instruction in a classroom setting. In this case, Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 candidates should be given opportunities to practice effective instruction of handwriting through pre-practicum, role play, and/or simulations.

### 3. Sentence Structure and Writing Conventions

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<p>[depending on determination of prior knowledge]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Writing and Language conventions noted in the <a href="#">MA English Language Arts and Literacy Frameworks</a></li> <li>Writing knowledge and skills assessed in the Writing Subtest of the <a href="#">Communications and Literacy Skills MTEL</a></li> </ul>	<p>a. Explicit, evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction of sentence structure and <u>writing conventions</u>, as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a>, including the ability to implement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborative practice opportunities, such as peer feedback activities</li> <li>Instruction embedded in meaningful, authentic writing tasks</li> <li>Development of syntactic awareness of academic English and/or home languages or dialects</li> <li>Supports for multilingual and bidialectal students, such as guided practice or explicitly teaching <u>text connectives</u></li> </ol>

### 4. Writing Craft

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<p>[depending on determination of prior knowledge]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Text Types and Purposes noted in the <a href="#">MA English Language Arts and Literacy Frameworks</a></li> <li>Writing knowledge and skills assessed in the Writing Subtest of the <a href="#">Communications and Literacy Skills MTEL</a></li> </ul>	<p>a. Evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining methods for teaching <u>writing craft</u>, as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a>, including the ability to implement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explicit instruction in the differences between speaking and writing</li> <li>Explicit instruction of genres relevant to grade-level content learning</li> <li>The use of mentor texts in building metalinguistic awareness, especially for multilingual and bidialectal learners, and supporting students' understanding of writing craft at the discourse, paragraph, sentence, and word/phrase level</li> <li>The use of a gradual release model that involves building the field or knowledge of the topic, deconstruction of mentor texts or model responses, teacher modeling through think-alouds and/or co-construction of a text, collaborative writing, and independent writing</li> <li>Frequent and sustained writing practice embedded in authentic tasks tied to content and student interest</li> </ol>

## 5. Writing Process

Candidates are introduced to:	Candidates [practice and ultimately] demonstrate:
<p>[depending on determination of prior knowledge]:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The steps and skills needed to write using research, as well as the production and distribution of writing noted in the <a href="#">MA English Language Arts and Literacy Frameworks</a></li> <li>Writing knowledge and skills assessed in the Writing Subtest of the <a href="#">Communications and Literacy Skills MTEL</a></li> </ul>	<p>a. Evidence-based, culturally and linguistically sustaining instructional practices for each stage of the writing process as outlined in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a>, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of modeling to support a student's understanding of the purpose and application of a writing strategy (such as the use of a graphic organizer)</li> <li>The ability to provide targeted, explicit, timely, and meaningful feedback on student writing throughout the writing process delivered in a way that promotes a safe learning environment</li> <li>The gradual release of responsibility to students to independently use (and/or evaluate the efficacy of) the strategy in their own writing</li> <li>The ability to adapt writing strategies and processes to the linguistic and cultural needs of students, including knowing when to use evidence-based instructional supports for multilingual and bidialectal students, such as scaffolding through sentence frames or providing additional processing time</li> </ol>

## Part II. Field-Based Experiences

Candidates have multiple opportunities to apply the content knowledge and skills needed to effectively teach early literacy across their field-based experiences.

<b>A. Candidates are given opportunities throughout the program of study to:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Practice (e.g., rehearse, role play, or complete simulations of) evidence-based early literacy instruction prior to their field-based experience(s)</li> <li>2. Observe (in person, virtually, or via video) models of culturally and linguistically sustaining, evidence-based early literacy practice in PK-3 classrooms aligned to the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></li> </ol>
<b>B. Candidates are given opportunities in field-based experiences<sup>6</sup> and classroom settings to:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Skillfully use high-quality instructional materials aligned to the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a> through evidence-based, inclusive, and culturally and linguistically sustaining practices</li> <li>2. Apply learning about the development of language and literacy with students within the PK-3 grade span, including students who are multilingual and bidialectal and students who experience reading difficulties</li> <li>3. Implement <u>tier one and tier two</u> evidence-based instructional practices that match the strengths, needs, abilities, and interests of each student in their class</li> </ol>
<b>C. The Sponsoring Organization ensures that:</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pre-practicum and practicum experiences build to candidate readiness for effective literacy instruction in the licensure role, including opportunities to observe, practice, and demonstrate instruction of all <u>components of a core literacy block</u> as described in the <a href="#">Mass Literacy Guide</a></li> <li>2. Supervising Practitioners are skillful in implementing culturally and linguistically sustaining, evidence-based literacy practices, use high-quality instructional materials in their classrooms, and are able to effectively guide candidates in analysis of literacy practices and instructional materials</li> <li>3. Educator Preparation Program Faculty and Program Supervisors work together with the Supervising Practitioner to effectively guide, support, and evaluate candidates in applying culturally and linguistically sustaining, evidence-based instructional practices in field-based experiences aligned with <a href="#">the Mass Literacy Guide</a></li> </ol>

<sup>6</sup> If it is not possible to provide candidates with field-based experiences in a setting that has all of these aspects in place, it is the responsibility of the Sponsoring Organization to identify the gap(s) within the specific setting and provide additional resources to the candidate to address that area, such as providing candidates with opportunities to engage in virtual or simulated instructional environments. DESE may request evidence of these additional resources at the time of an interim or formal review.



## Part III. Partnerships

In their preparation, candidates have the opportunity to experience intentional and mutually beneficial [partnerships](#) with districts that go beyond transactional agreements (e.g., field-based experience placements only), such that they consistently support preparation candidates and positively impact the early literacy outcomes of PK-12 students.

### **A. The Sponsoring Organization establishes, evaluates, and sustains partnerships with PK-12 schools/districts to ensure partnerships meet the needs of all candidates' development of effective literacy instruction, including:**

1. Opportunities to learn, use, and skillfully adapt high-quality instructional materials aligned to the [Mass Literacy Guide](#), such as those rated highly in [CURATE](#)
2. Opportunities to observe, access student data, and participate in an effective multi-tiered system of support for PK-3 students that is aligned to expectations outlined in the [Mass Literacy Guide](#)
3. A school culture that values and promotes culturally and linguistically sustaining literacy instruction

### **B. The Sponsoring Organization collaborates with PK-12 partners in order to respond to the literacy needs of the school/district.**

### **C. The Sponsoring Organization solicits input from PK-12 partners to identify its own strengths and areas for growth specific to literacy instruction and takes aligned actions (e.g., improving preparation curriculum, strengthening field-based experiences).**

## Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

*Language is dynamic and our understanding of literacy is always growing. As a result, this glossary cannot be static, but rather should reflect the shifts and nuanced changes in our understanding of the terms used in this document. Please submit suggestions for additions or revisions by emailing [educatorpreparation@mass.gov](mailto:educatorpreparation@mass.gov), subject line: early literacy glossary. With your help, we can continue to improve our shared understanding of these critical terms.*

### Active discussion of a text (Mass Literacy Guide, 2022)

Discussions about a text (either during a read aloud or after students have independently read a text) that empower language development and prompt understanding of the text through skillful facilitation and text-based questions that promote a deeper exploration of what the text says and critical analysis of what the text means.

### All (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [MA DESE], 2023):

When used in reference to any group of individuals throughout this document, “all” represents each member of that group, inclusive of, but not limited to, all races, ethnicities, cultures, languages, socioeconomic statuses, sexual orientations, gender identities, and abilities, with particular focus on those who have been systematically marginalized or underserved, such as those who identify as Black, Hispanic and Latino, Asian, Indigenous, and/or Multiracial.

### Assessments (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

- **Universal Screening:** conducted to identify or predict students who may be at risk for poor learning outcomes. Universal screening assessments are typically brief, conducted with all students at a grade level, and followed by additional testing or short-term progress monitoring to corroborate students' risk status (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports).  
Early literacy universal screening is proactive and designed to gather information on the most predictive literacy skills, making it possible to identify each student's risk of experiencing reading difficulties, including risk of dyslexia. This screening process and resulting data analysis allow educators to intervene with targeted evidence-based instruction at the first indication that a student may be experiencing challenges in learning to read. Using a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) model, educators use data to inform core instruction, instructional pacing, intensity, and differentiation of targeted intervention, as well as determine if additional assessment is needed.
- **Diagnostic Assessments:** used if a student is identified by a screening assessment and/or teacher observation as experiencing reading difficulties or likely to experience reading difficulties in the future. Diagnostic assessments allow a teacher to determine students' individual strengths, weaknesses, knowledge, and skills prior to instruction and are primarily used to guide instructional planning (National Center on Intensive Intervention).
- **Progress Monitoring:** used to assess students' academic performance, to quantify a student rate of improvement or responsiveness to instruction, and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction (Center on Multi-Tiered System of Supports).
- **Formative Assessments:** used instructionally to help educators adapt instruction to meet students' needs by identifying students' strengths and areas of growth weaknesses in specific skills.

### Bias (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

A disproportionate weight that may be created intentionally or unintentionally in favor of or against an idea, thing, individual, or group.

### Bidialectal (Dyslexia Guidelines, MA DESE, 2023):

Having proficiency in two dialects of the same language. DESE's definition draws from the precise definition of dialect used by linguists: “a version of a language spoken by a group of people distinguished by characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, and/or geographic region” (Washington, 2021).

Candidate (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

A person who is currently enrolled in an educator preparation program.

Close Reading (MA DESE, 2017)

An instructional routine for determining what a complex text means by examining word choice, figurative language, and the structure of sentences, paragraphs, or sections (Anchor Standards 1, 4, and 5 for Reading) and being able to cite evidence for conclusions (Anchor Standard 1 for Reading).<sup>1</sup> One caution – close analytical reading isn't equally appropriate for all texts! It is most effectively applied to poetry or short complex texts with multiple layers of meaning and nuanced vocabulary, or to excerpts from larger complex texts that might be difficult because of their unfamiliar topic or style of writing.<sup>2</sup> The technique simply is not usually needed for texts with literal, straightforward ideas, simple sentence structures, and familiar vocabulary. Reading closely for the purpose of analyzing texts often involves re-reading a difficult passage several times in order to determine meaning. In English language arts classes, reading closely includes study of words and phrases in the text, answering text-dependent questions, and discussion that often leads to written analysis.

Components of a Core Literacy Block (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

The core literacy block in grades preK–3 includes three main components: Foundational Skills, Engaging with Complex Text, and Writing. Oral Language is the bedrock, and differentiated instruction happens throughout.

Contextualized Teaching (Effective Practices for Developing Literacy Skills of English Learners, ETS, 2012):

An instructional approach that more explicitly integrates the content of a lesson with previous lessons, overarching learning goals, cross-curricular connections, and opportunities for real-world, meaningful applications.

Critical Literacy (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022)

The ability to read beyond the surface level of a text and develop critical consciousness through the process of noticing, discussing, and critiquing issues such as power and privilege where they are reflected in text

Cross-linguistic Transfer (MA DESE, 2023):

The process of using knowledge of one language to assist the learning of a second language. Educators will want to know what elements of the first language are similar to or different from the second language and can aid or complicate English language development.

Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practice (MA DESE, 2023):

Affirming and valuing students' cultures, prior experiences, and linguistic resources to make learning more relevant and effective; promoting academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical awareness; valuing multilingualism as an asset. (Supporting Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices).

Curricular Materials (MA DESE, 2022):

Resources teachers use to facilitate sequences of learning experiences (e.g., lesson and unit plans, texts); also called adopted or written curriculum, or instructional materials.

Curriculum (MA DESE, 2022):

A sequence of student learning experiences teachers facilitate using curricular materials as a foundation (not a script!); also called enacted or taught curriculum.

Decodable Text (Florida Center for Reading Research, 2020):

Text in which a high proportion of words (80%-90%) comprise sound symbol relationships that have already been taught. It is used for the purpose of providing practice with specific decoding skills and is a bridge between learning phonics and the application of phonics in independent reading.

Decoding (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

The ability to translate a word from print to speech, usually by employing knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences; also the act of deciphering a new word by sounding it out.

Dialogic Reading (Reading Rockets, 2022):

A method of reading to early learners that prompts students to be actively involved in learning from books. The fundamental reading technique in dialogic reading is the PEER sequence. This is a short interaction between a child and the adult. The adult:

- Prompts the child to say something about the book,
- Evaluates the child's response,
- Expands the child's response by rephrasing and adding information to it, and
- Repeats the prompt to make sure the child has learned from the expansion.

Dyslexia (Dyslexia Guidelines, MA DESE, 2022):

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction. Secondary consequences may include problems in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience that can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge.

Elkonin Boxes (The Florida Center for Reading Research, 2020):

A framework used during phonemic awareness instruction. Elkonin Boxes are sometimes referred to as Sound Boxes. When working with words, the teacher can draw one box per sound for a target word. Students push a marker into one box as they segment each sound in the word.

Encoding (U.S. Department of Education, *Institution of Education Sciences*, 2016):

The process of determining the spelling of a word based on the sounds in the word.

Evidence-based (U.S. Department of Education, Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015):

Practices or programs that have evidence to show that they are effective at producing results and improving outcomes when implemented as supported by valid and reliable research. In order to be considered "evidence-based," a practice or program must have tier 1 (strong) or tier 2 (moderate) evidence to support its use in a given setting as outlined in [ESSA Tiers of Evidence: What You Need to Know](#).

Extended discourse (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

A type of spoken interaction that promotes language development. Extended discourse strategies support students to participate in longer — or extended — conversations. These extended conversations give teachers the opportunity to elicit, model, and affirm student language production; they give students the opportunity to practice increasingly complex language in an authentic context. Additionally, play or child-directed time in the classroom presents the ideal opportunity for extended discourse and intentional interactions that support oral language development. Extended discourse in the classroom leads to growth in vocabulary, syntax, and grammar — all components of oral language that undergird reading comprehension.

Explicit instruction (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

Instruction that involves direct explanation. The teacher's language is concise and specific. Explicit instruction means that the actions of the teacher are clear, unambiguous, direct, and visible. This makes it clear what the students are to do and learn. Nothing is left to guess work.

Field-Based Experiences (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

Experiences in PK-12 schools and classrooms, including observation of classrooms, pre- practicum, practicum/practicum equivalent, internship, or apprenticeship, that are integral components of any program for the preparation of educators.

Fluency (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

Efficient, effective word-recognition skills that permit a reader to construct the meaning of text. Fluency is manifested in accurate, rapid, expressive oral reading and is applied during, and makes possible, silent reading comprehension.

Foundational Skills (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2017):

The skills necessary for reading, or the act of processing text in order to make meaning, including print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency.

High-quality curricular materials (MA DESE, 2023):

High-quality curricular materials exhibit a coherent sequence of lessons that target learning of grade-appropriate skills and knowledge through instructional strategies that are well supported by research and other characteristics such as engaging content and inclusive design. Some factors in quality are nonnegotiable, while others vary by context: for example, compatibility with a school's technology infrastructure or cultural relevance to its student population.

Linguistically Responsive (The Massachusetts Blueprint for English Learner Success, MA DESE, 2022):

Aligned with and affirming to students' and families' linguistic backgrounds and skills. This includes use of high-quality translation and interpretation.

Multilingual Learner (Guidance on English Learner Education Services, MA DESE, 2022)

Federal and state statutes, use the term "English learner." In practice, the Department sometimes uses the term "multilingual learners" or MLs.

The term "English learner" is defined in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Section 8101(20), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) as follows.

The term "English learner," when used with respect to an individual, means an individual—

- A. who is aged 3 through 21;
- B. who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- C. (i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;  
(ii) (I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and  
(II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or  
(iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and
- D. whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual
  - (i) the ability to meet the challenging State academic standards;
  - (ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or
  - (iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society.

**State law defines the term "English learner" as:**

"a student who does not speak English or whose native language is not English, and who is not currently able to perform ordinary classroom work in English."

Multisensory Instruction (Center for Effective Reading Instruction, 2016):

Multi-sensory instruction combines listening, speaking, reading, and a tactile or kinesthetic activity. Teaching experience supports a multi-sensory instruction approach in the early grades to improve phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading comprehension skills. Multi-sensory instruction combines listening, speaking, reading, and a tactile or kinesthetic activity. Phonics instruction lends itself to multisensory teaching techniques, because these techniques can be used to focus students' attention on the sequence of letters in printed words. As such, including manipulatives, gestures, and speaking and auditory cues increases students' acquisition of phonics skills. An added benefit is that multisensory techniques are quite motivating and engaging to many students.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

a comprehensive continuum of evidence-based, systemic practices to support a rapid response to students' needs, with regular observation to facilitate data-based instructional decision making.

Harlacher et al. (2014) described six key tenets of the MTSS framework:

- All students are capable of grade-level learning with adequate support.
- MTSS is rooted in proactivity and prevention.
- The system utilizes evidence-based practices.
- Decisions and procedures are driven by school and student data.
- The degree of support given to students is based on their needs.
- Implementation occurs school-wide and requires stakeholder collaboration.

These systems of support are organized into three tiers:

#### **Tier 1**

Tier 1 provides the instructional foundation within a tiered model and is often referred to as "core." Core instruction is provided to all students (Connor et al., 2007). Data from screening and progress monitoring is used to differentiate instruction within tier 1. All students must have equitable access to core instruction that addresses grade-level expectations for learning.

#### **Tier 2**

Tier 2 is preventive intervention offered to students who fall behind, who demonstrate difficulty based on screening measures, or who make weak progress with only general classroom instruction. Instruction in tier 2 must be targeted to the underlying difficulty(s) impacting the students' progress in literacy. Students in tier 2 receive supplemental ("in addition to") small group instruction. Importantly, this instruction should be systematic, explicit, and highly interactive. Progress-monitoring data should be used to group students periodically. Students who demonstrate improvement and exit from tier 2 support should be carefully monitored to ensure that general classroom instruction is adequate. In many studies, effective tier 2 intervention has been shown to reduce or eliminate reading difficulties in the early elementary grades (Gersten et al, 2017).

#### **Tier 3**

Tier 3 is more intensive intervention offered to students for whom support in tiers 1 and 2 was insufficient. Instruction in tier 3 must be targeted to the underlying difficulty(s) impacting the students' progress in literacy. Ongoing tracking of student performance is critical in tier 3. If students still experience difficulty after receiving high-quality core instruction and targeted tier 2 support, they may be evaluated for possible special education services, but tier 3 is not synonymous with special education.

Orthographic Mapping (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

The mental process that we use to store words so they can be automatically recognized. Orthographic mapping is what allows a proficient reader to instantly read any familiar word (instead of having to decode it). By promoting long-term memory of words, teachers can help students rapidly improve their fluency in increasingly complex texts. Orthographic mapping happens when a reader connects the sounds in a word to its spelling and its meaning. When a reader encounters a new word, decodes it by associating its spelling with its sounds, and thinks of its meaning, this promotes orthographic mapping of the word. After several exposures to reading the word this way, the word will be stored in long-term memory for immediate, effortless retrieval.

Partnership (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

Deliberate collaboration between Sponsoring Organizations and a PK-12 school/district to ensure effective preparation that meets the needs of the Sponsoring Organization and PK-12 partner.

Phonics (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

A way of teaching the code-based portion of reading and spelling that stresses symbol-sound relationships; especially important in beginning reading instruction.

Phonological Awareness (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

The recognition that words have constituent sounds. Constituents of a word (e.g., book) may be distinguished in three ways: by syllables (/book/), by onsets and rimes (/b/ and /ook/), or by phonemes (/b/ and /oo/ and /k/)"

Practicum/Practicum Equivalent (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

A field-based experience within an approved program in the role and at the level of the license sought, during which a candidate's performance is supervised jointly by the Supervising Practitioner and Program Supervisor and evaluated through a performance assessment for the Initial License. Practicum/Practicum equivalent requirements are described in [603 CMR 7.04 \(4\)](#).

Pre-Practicum (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

Early field-based experiences integrated into courses or seminars in accordance with the [Pre-Practicum Guidelines](#).

Print Concepts (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

Knowledge of print conventions (e.g., in English, print is read top to bottom, left to right), the understanding that printed letters make words that correspond to oral language, and that print carries meaning. Print concepts allow children to begin interacting and interpreting text. Print concepts may be modeled and discussed in authentic reading contexts, such as during a teacher-led read-aloud or during teacher-child interactions in the classroom library. Interacting with print and observing others interacting with print in both authentic and dramatic play contexts supports development of print concepts (Morrow & Schickedanz, 2006).

Professional Standards for Teachers (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

The pedagogical and other professional knowledge and skills required of all teachers defined in the Guidelines for the [Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (PSTs). The standards are articulated in [603 CMR 7.08 \(2\)](#) and align expectations for pre-service candidates with those for in-service teachers as outlined in the [Massachusetts Educator Evaluation Framework](#).

Program approval (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

State authorization of an educator preparation program or its Sponsoring Organization to endorse program completers prepared in Massachusetts for educator licensure in the Commonwealth. Also, the process through which a program or Sponsoring Organization may receive state approval.



Program of Study (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

The coursework, seminars, workshops, webinars, field experiences, and other program components that are required for the completion of an approved program.

Program Supervisor (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

The supervisor from the sponsoring organization, under whose immediate supervision the candidate for licensure practices during a practicum. The Program Supervisor is responsible for overseeing the student teaching experience, observing and providing feedback to the candidate alongside the Supervising Practitioner, and coordinating the performance assessment.

Research-based:

Practices or programs based on the strongest research available and informed by well-supported theories. In order to be considered “research-based,” a practice or program must have tier 3 (promising) or tier 4 (demonstrates rationale) evidence to support its use in a given setting as outlined in [ESSA Tiers of Evidence: What You Need to Know](#).

Reviewer (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

Person identified by DESE as someone with the knowledge and experience required to evaluate evidence of how programs meet review criteria. Reviewers are chosen based on their qualifications and screened for bias or potential conflicts of interest. Reviewers also receive extensive training and calibration to implement the review process.

Sight Word (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

A word that a reader can instantly and automatically recognize. "[W]hen a reader has learned a 'sight word,' she can retrieve the spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of that word as soon as her eyes alight upon it" (Pace Miles & Ehri, 2019, n.p.). For proficient readers, practically all words are read from memory by sight (Apel, 2011; Ehri, 1997, 2014). These readers are proficient because pronunciations and meanings come to mind automatically and instantly when written words are seen (Henbest & Apel, 2018; McCardle, Scarborough, & Catts, 2001). With limited sight vocabulary, reading is slow, laborious, and dysfluent. Readers who have to decode numerous individual words while reading are not able to read texts fluently and with expression.

Sponsoring Organization (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

Institution of higher education or alternative preparation organization that provides, or seeks to provide, approved educator preparation programs. During the program approval process, evidence collection and evaluation will focus on the specific unit within the organization that oversees educator preparation programs (e.g., Education Department, School of Education). Approved Sponsoring Organizations have the ability to endorse candidates for Massachusetts licensure.

Student (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

A pupil enrolled in a PK-12 school.

Subject Matter Knowledge (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

The content knowledge expectations for educator licensure in Massachusetts for each license are outlined in the [Subject Matter Knowledge \(SMK\) Guidelines](#) per [603 CMR 7.06](#). The subject matter knowledge requirements directly align with the set of PK-12 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks appropriate for each subject and grade level license, wherever possible.

Supervising Practitioner (Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval, MA DESE, 2023):

A PK-12 educator under whose immediate supervision the candidate for licensure practices during practicum. For the educator of record, a comparably qualified educator will function as the supervising practitioner during the practicum equivalent. Requirements to qualify as a Supervising Practitioner are described in [603 CMR 7.02](#).



### Systematic Instruction (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2022):

A carefully planned sequence for instruction, similar to a builder's blueprint for a house, with lessons that build on previously taught information, from simple to complex

### Text Connectives (WIDA, 2020):

words or phrases that connect ideas in a sentence, such as coordinating and subordinating conjunctions and linking phrases, and signal different relationships (causal, additive, chronological). Connectives create cohesion and logical development across a text. Examples of connectives:

- addition: and, and then, furthermore, in addition, apart from that, furthermore, besides, alongwith, again, along with
- cause/consequence: because, so, despite, nevertheless, even though, so, therefore, consequently, due to, because of this, as a result
- comparison/contrast: but, for example, instead, in other words, however, in fact, in that case, while, although, on the other hand, despite
- concession: while, although
- condition: if, unless
- purpose: in order to, so
- sequence: first, second, finally, in the first place, to start with, at this point, to get back to the point, in short, all in all, to conclude
- time: when, then, next, afterward, after a while, at the same time, at this moment, meanwhile, previously, before that, finally

### Translanguaging (WIDA, 2020):

The act of using all of the languages and language varieties available to communicate and understand the world. While these languages may be recognized as separate, for bilingual children they are all part of their language resources, or linguistic repertoire.

### Types of Text

- Decodable (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2017): texts connected to recently taught letter-sound correspondences that provide students with the opportunity to immediately apply newly learned skills to their reading
- Predictable (Mass Literacy, "The Four Shifts," 2022): texts that encourage students to guess based on context or the beginning letters of a word rather than phonic decoding.
- Leveled (Colorado Department of Education, 2021): texts that have been given a difficulty rating based on length, amount of words, sentence length and complexity. Leveled texts are often selected by topic or interest with a focus on "authentic text" that allows for prioritizing making meaning over decoding.
- Complex (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2017): Text complexity is defined by a range of qualitative and quantitative features, and depends on the reader and task for which it is selected. Complex text offers opportunities to develop academic language and acquire knowledge about the world, both of which contribute to development of reading comprehension (Shanahan et al., 2010). The Massachusetts 2017 English Language Arts and Literacy Framework places "equal emphasis on the sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read. Standard 10 defines a grade-by-grade 'staircase' of increasing text complexity that rises from beginning reading to the college and career readiness level" (12).

Writing Conventions (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2017):

The widely accepted practices of English punctuation, grammar, and usage that are taught in schools.

Writing Craft (Mass Literacy Guide, MA DESE, 2017):

Craft refers to the artistic skill or technique with which an author puts together narrative and other elements in order to convey meaning and produce effect.

# Appendix B: The Early Literacy Program Approval Process Integrated with the Formal Review Model

In accordance with the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria, by SY2024-2025, all approved Massachusetts Sponsoring Organizations with Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 licensure programs must prepare teacher candidates in evidence-based early literacy practices articulated in Mass Literacy through coursework and opportunities for practice and high-quality feedback. DESE will use the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria in decisions about program approval, including authorizing an individual program or group of programs to operate. Through its oversight, DESE seeks to ensure that educators entering the workforce have sufficient knowledge in evidence-based early literacy instructional practices to support students in mastering relevant Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

The literacy-specific reviews for Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 licensure programs align with the formal review process outlined in the 2023 [Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval](#) with additional components to allow for a deeper understanding of early literacy practices within the three relevant programs. One key difference for the literacy-specific review process is the inclusion of in-person observations in select settings, such as courses and field-based placements. The table below illustrates this additional component as well as other literacy-specific elements for each stage of the review process.

To support Sponsoring Organizations during the formal review process (including the literacy-specific review), DESE will provide technical assistance to each organization through information sessions, phone or virtual meetings, and timely responses to questions or concerns. This technical assistance includes setting clear timelines, expectations, and requirements for the review process; providing templates of required documents; and sharing resources to explain requirements and options for the review. These resources will be adjusted routinely based on feedback from Sponsoring Organizations, external [reviewers](#), and DESE staff.

## Overview of the Early Literacy Review Process

The following table includes the stages and steps of the formal review process as articulated in the [Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval](#), with the addition of the final right hand column that includes components specific to early literacy reviews.

\*Note: the table outlines the process for literacy-specific reviews that happen in conjunction with a Sponsoring Organization’s overall formal review, and does not necessarily reflect the process for stand-alone or "interim" literacy-specific reviews. See [Appendix C](#) for more information on early literacy-specific interim reviews.

Stage	Step	Timing <sup>7</sup>	Description of Activities	Early Literacy Specific Components of the Process
<b>Launch</b>	Notification	Six months before cohort launch	Sponsoring organizations whose programs are nearing the end of their approval period are contacted by DESE and notified of the need for a formal review. <sup>31</sup> This communication formally launches the review and includes a timeline and overview of the process.	DESE notifies a sponsoring organization that the upcoming formal review will include a program-specific review of Early Childhood, Elementary, and/or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 licensure programs.
<b>Launch</b>	Launch Worksheet	Month 1 (minimum of two weeks to complete)	The sponsoring organization completes a brief worksheet to provide foundational context about its programs, which enables DESE to adjust surveys, focus groups, and interviews based on the organization’s unique structure.	<p>Sponsoring Organizations will confirm the Early Childhood, Elementary, and/or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 programs being moved forward for formal review. There will be additional questions on this worksheet to confirm program-specific information for these programs.</p> <p>If a Sponsoring Organization wishes to put forth a new Early Childhood, Elementary, or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 program, they will indicate that on the Launch Worksheet. It will be reviewed through a modified process, given there would be no evidence of impact to review.</p>

<sup>7</sup>Timing estimates are provided as an overview of what to expect in each stage and reflect the minimum amount of time that may be provided for each step. Timelines will vary slightly between Sponsoring Organizations. Each Sponsoring Organization will be provided with an individualized review schedule during the Initiation step.

Stage	Step	Timing	Description of Activities	Early Literacy Specific Components of the Process
<b>Launch</b>	Cohort Launch Session	Month 1	DESE hosts a launch session for all sponsoring organizations undergoing review. The session provides a more detailed overview of the review process and timeline, evidence sources, and guidance for the initial submission materials.	DESE will extend this launch session for any Sponsoring Organization with Elementary, Early Childhood, and/or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 licensure programs to provide an overview of the Early Literacy specific review process and introduce the Early Literacy Program Matrix, a document that maps the Early Literacy Program Approval Expectations to a relevant program of study.
<b>Launch</b>	Technical Assistance Call	Month 2	DESE leads a call with the sponsoring Organization to discuss details in the launch worksheet, including results of the Needs Assessment, and provides support for the upcoming Program Overview, required documents, and candidate artifacts submission.	Early literacy-specific information will be integrated into this call for Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 programs.
<b>Launch</b>	Program Overview, Required Document, and Candidate Artifacts Submission	Months 2-5 (four months to complete)	The Sponsoring Organization compiles required documents and candidate artifacts and completes a worksheet providing high-level information for each domain and each program grouping within the Instruction domain. This information is used to orient the review team to the organization's approach to educator preparation prior to speaking with stakeholders.	The Sponsoring Organization submits Programs of Study for Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 programs as well as an Early Literacy Program Matrix as part of the initial submission materials.
<b>Initial Inquiry</b>	Technical Assistance Call	Month 3	DESE provides written guidance outlining the next stage of the review and leads a call to confirm understanding of key requirements and logistics for surveys, focus groups, and interviews.	In this call, DESE outlines the early literacy-specific elements of focus groups, interviews, and surveys as well as the logistics for observations of coursework and field placements.

Stage	Step	Timing	Description of Activities	Early Literacy Specific Components of the Process
<b>Initial Inquiry</b>	Survey Completion/ Focus Group and Interview Recruitment	Months 3-6 (four months to complete)	<p>DESE shares survey links with the Sponsoring Organization for distribution to each relevant stakeholder group.</p> <p>The Sponsoring Organization recruits relevant internal and external stakeholders to complete surveys and sign up to participate in scheduled focus groups. Surveys and focus groups are distinct steps in the review process and are not duplicative of each other. All stakeholders from the most recent three years should be encouraged to participate in both aspects, as focus groups are designed to build off and further explore survey results.</p>	<p>The Sponsoring Organization ensures that Program Supervisors, Supervising Practitioners, faculty, partners, and candidates/recent completers for Elementary, Early Childhood, and/or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 licensure programs are included in the recruitment process for the general review.</p> <p>Note: the general survey will have a subset of questions specific to early literacy for individuals connected to the relevant licensure programs.</p>
<b>Initial Inquiry</b>	Stakeholder Engagement (Welcome Meeting, Leadership Interview, and Focus Groups)	Month 7	<p>Stakeholder engagement is conducted over the course of one to three days and is scheduled in collaboration with the Sponsoring Organization based on organization structure, size, and stakeholder availability. Stakeholder engagement includes a welcome meeting, interview with educator preparation leadership, and focus groups with internal and external stakeholders. It may also include onsite course observations for some or all program groupings.</p> <p>Focus groups and interviews are typically hosted in a virtual format to support accessibility and increased participation, though in-person focus groups may occur when specific context makes them preferable.</p>	<p>A member of DESE's review team with Early Literacy Content expertise conducts in-person observations of select settings, such as relevant courses within Elementary, Early Childhood, and/or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 programs, and field-based placements in PK-3 classrooms of teacher candidates in the relevant programs.</p> <p>DESE engages with stakeholders from each relevant program about Early Literacy through interviews and focus groups.</p>

Stage	Step	Timing	Description of Activities	Early Literacy Specific Components of the Process
<b>Follow-Up Inquiry</b>	Technical Assistance Call	Month 8	DESE provides written guidance outlining the Follow-Up Inquiry stage and leads a call to preview the Sponsoring Organization's Targeted Submission worksheets.	For Sponsoring Organizations with relevant programs, DESE will provide additional guidance about any required documents specific to Early Literacy included in the Follow-Up Inquiry. DESE will extend the call to preview questions about candidates' preparation relative to Early Literacy instruction within the Targeted Submission worksheets.
<b>Follow-Up Inquiry</b>	Targeted Submission	Months 8-12 (five months to complete)	<p>The Sponsoring Organization completes a Targeted Submission worksheet for each domain.</p> <p>Prompts within each worksheet are determined based on evidence gathered during the Launch and Initial Inquiry stages of the review and provide the Sponsoring Organization with the opportunity to address gaps and/or inconsistencies that could lead to findings and elevate strengths that could lead to commendations.</p> <p>During this stage, Sponsoring Organizations review summaries of key evidence collected during the Launch and Initial Inquiry stages and respond with additional examples, data, and context.</p>	<p>Sponsoring Organizations with Elementary, Early Childhood, and/or Moderate Disabilities programs complete a Targeted Submission worksheet for the Instruction, Field Based Experiences, and Partnerships domains with prompts specific to Early Literacy.</p> <p>A member of DESE's review team with Early Literacy Content expertise may conduct follow-up in-person observations of select settings, such as relevant courses within Elementary, Early Childhood, and/or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 programs, and field-based placements in PK-3 classrooms of teacher candidates in the relevant programs.</p>
<b>Determination</b>	Reviewer Work Time and Report Drafting	Months 13-16	<p>DESE works with the review team and engages in calibration to determine criterion and domain ratings.</p> <p>DESE drafts a written report summarizing these decisions and an internal DESE team vets the content to ensure decisions are evidence-based, equity-oriented, and consistent across organizations.</p>	The review team will have a member with content expertise in evidence-based Early Literacy instruction. The Early Literacy Reviewer will engage with the review team and make recommendations for the relevant domains. These recommendations will be considered for program level approval as well as the Sponsoring Organization's overall ratings.

Stage	Step	Timing	Description of Activities	Early Literacy Specific Components of the Process
<b>Determination</b>	Factual Accuracy Report Shared	Month 17	DESE shares a Factual Accuracy draft report with the Sponsoring Organization, outlining the criterion- and domain-level ratings and the key evidence that informed those determinations.	Evidence and ratings from the Early Literacy specific review will be included in the Factual Accuracy draft report.
<b>Determination</b>	Factual Accuracy Response	10 business days to complete from receipt of report	<p>Upon receiving the Factual Accuracy draft, the Sponsoring Organization reviews the document for factual errors. Given the substantive nature of the review and calibration checkpoints built into the process, organizations may submit corrections to factual mistakes in the report but may not refute conclusions or judgments made by the review team at this time.</p> <p>DESE reviews the response carefully and amends the report as deemed appropriate.</p>	Sponsoring Organizations will review evidence and ratings from the Early Literacy specific review for factual errors.
<b>Determination</b>	Notification of Approval Determination	30 days after receipt of factual accuracy response	<p>DESE notifies the Sponsoring Organization of its approval determination, including any program-specific approval determinations, in writing.</p> <p>If the Sponsoring Organization receives an approval determination of Approved with Conditions or Probationary Approval, the review designee works with DESE to determine timelines and next steps in response to findings requiring action.</p>	<p>DESE notifies the Sponsoring Organization of the approval determinations for each Early Childhood, Elementary, and/or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 programs.</p> <p>If any Early Childhood, Elementary, and/or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 program receives an approval determination of Approved with Conditions or Probationary Approval, the review designee works with DESE to determine timelines and next steps in response to conditions.</p>



Stage	Step	Timing	Description of Activities	Early Literacy Specific Components of the Process
<b>Determination</b>	Rejoinder Response and Hearing Requests	Within 30 days of receipt of approval determination	Any Sponsoring Organization with an approval determination of Approved with Conditions, Probationary Approval, or Not Approved at the organization and/or program level may contest judgments or decisions reflected in the report by submitting a rejoinder response within 30 days of receipt of the final report and approval letter. The rejoinder response must be submitted using DESE's provided template. DESE reviews the rejoinder response and, at the Commissioner's discretion, may modify the report and determinations.	A Sponsoring Organization with any Early Childhood, Elementary, or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 program granted Approved with Conditions, Probationary Approval, or Not Approved may contest judgments or decisions reflected in the report by following the same procedures outlined in the Guidelines for Program Approval contesting a decision at the organization level.
<b>Determination</b>	Approval Determination Updated on Profiles	60 days after notification of approval determination	DESE publishes the Sponsoring Organization's approval determination on Public Profiles.	The program-specific approval determinations for each program, including each Early Childhood, Elementary, or Moderate Disabilities PK-2/PK-8 program, is also reported on Public Profiles.

## Appendix C: The Early Literacy Program Interim Review Process

As described in the [Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval](#), DESE has the authority to conduct interim reviews to determine whether approved programs meet the standards and benchmarks set forth in [603 CMR 7.03 \(2\) and \(3\)](#) and the [Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval](#), including these criteria.

Interim reviews may be targeted to specific expectation(s) or program(s) within a Sponsoring Organization. DESE reserves the authority to conduct interim reviews to ensure Early Childhood, Elementary, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 programs are meeting the expectations described in these criteria.

If DESE initiates interim reviews for these programs, it will provide all impacted Sponsoring Organizations with a description of the timeline, process, and expectations for the review.

(See the [Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval](#) for additional details about Interim Reviews.)

## Appendix D: Formative Feedback Reviews, 2022-2024

We know that any change to program requirements takes careful consideration to successfully operationalize, and that Sponsoring Organizations will need time to make programmatic shifts in order to meet the new expectations. Therefore, DESE invited Sponsoring Organizations with relevant licensure programs to participate in **optional formative feedback reviews throughout SY22-23, and will continue to offer this opportunity in Fall 2023 and Spring 2024**. The goal is for organizations to engage in the work of examining their current early literacy practices in a no-stakes environment, with support and feedback provided through an independent, confidential report, that is specific to the expectations for early literacy instruction. [Read more about the opportunity to participate in formative feedback reviews here.](#)

## Appendix E: Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout the process of drafting the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria, we have and will continue to rely heavily on the guidance and thought partnership of various stakeholders. The development of these program approval criteria reflect a process of initial stakeholder engagement, internal drafting, and multiple rounds of stakeholder feedback on the drafted language.

During the initial engagement stage, DESE staff heard from faculty members in educator preparation programs from various sponsoring organizations who participated in a listening tour in Spring 2022. Participants shared their perspectives on the initiative, allowing DESE to better understand the current landscape of early literacy instruction and informing the first draft of the program criteria. Throughout the drafting process, DESE also worked closely with literacy faculty from Salem State University and national experts to develop the outline and begin building out expectations across the three relevant domains. In 2022, DESE convened a working group of Massachusetts PK12 educators and higher education faculty in Elementary, Early Childhood, and Moderate Disabilities PK-2/ PK-8 programs to inform the development of the criteria. This diverse group of stakeholders provided direct feedback on the draft, emphasizing the criteria's focus on equitable instruction.

The DESE Office of Educator Effectiveness also solicited anonymous feedback from organizations who participated in an [Early Literacy Formative Feedback Review](#) in SY22-23. Most stakeholders were in support of the policies and ideals outlined in the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria, and a majority agreed that the criteria were clearly articulated and aligned with the skills and knowledge necessary to prepare educators of early literacy. Many of the critical comments and questions shared in the feedback sought clarity around the Early Literacy Review process. Other critical comments included a push to center the needs of multilingual and bidialectal students, more nuanced considerations for differences across licensure programs, and the need to build shared understanding of terms used throughout. In response to this feedback, DESE partnered with internal stakeholders, including the Office of Language Acquisition and the Early Learning Team, as well as external stakeholders in order to better respond to the concerns raised by participants in the formative feedback reviews. Subsequently, revisions were made throughout the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria, including:

- Greater specificity in the expectations for teacher candidates' effective instruction for multilingual and bidialectal learners
- Clarification of key terms and an expansion of the glossary
- Reformatting to make the progression of knowledge building and skill development clearer with adaptations for different licensure programs

Additionally, DESE plans to address feedback on implementation and the review process in the coming year. Technical assistance, resources, communication, and supports for organizations as they align to the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria and will be ongoing in the upcoming years.

## Appendix F: Research and Resources Aligned with the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria and Mass Literacy

Effective educators understand that any definition of effective early literacy instruction expands and shifts as we learn and grow with the research. We work in a dynamic field where there is always innovative and groundbreaking learning happening. The research and resources included in this list currently aligns with the Early Literacy Program Approval Criteria and the principles of effective early literacy practice outlined in the [Mass Literacy Guide](#). As the body of research that informs effective early literacy practice grows and changes, the research included will subsequently shift as well. As a result, Appendix E will be a living document updated on a regular basis in partnership with early literacy experts and scholars to reflect the best thinking about early literacy practice at the time of publication.

Criterion	Description	Examples
I.A.1.a	Frameworks for understanding the development of literacy	<p>Chall, J.S. (1983). <i>Stages of reading development</i>. McGraw Hill.</p> <p>Council of Great City Schools: The Nation’s Voice for Urban Education. (2023, May). <u><a href="#">A framework for foundational literacy skills instruction for English Learners</a></u>.</p> <p>Ehri, L. C. (1995). Phases of development in learning to read words by sight. <i>Journal of Research in Reading</i>, 18(2), 116- 125.</p> <p>Share, D. L. (1995). Phonological recoding and self-teaching: Sine qua non of reading acquisition. <i>Cognition</i>, 55(2), 151-218.</p>
I.A.1.b	Research on the interrelatedness of literacy skills	<p>Adams, M.J. (2010). <u><a href="#">Advancing our students’ language and literacy: The challenge of complex texts</a></u>. <i>American Editor</i>.</p> <p>Duke, N. K., &amp; Cartwright, K. B. (2021). <u><a href="#">The science of reading progresses: Communicating advances beyond the Simple View of Reading</a></u>. <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i>, 56(S1), S25-S44.</p> <p>Gough, P.B. &amp; Tunmer, W.E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. <i>Remedial and Special Education</i>, 7, 6–10.</p> <p>Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman &amp; D. Dickinson (Eds.), <i>Handbook for research in early literacy</i>, 97–110. Guilford Press.</p>
I.A.1.d	The basic principles of how the brain learns to read and write as demonstrated through neuroscientific research	<p>Dehaene, S. (2010). <i>Reading in the brain: The new science of how we read</i>. Viking.</p> <p>Neuroscientific research on culturally and linguistically sustaining practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hammond, Z. (2015). <i>Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students</i>. Corwin.</li> </ul> <p>Neuroscientific research on atypical reading development:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shaywitz, S. E., &amp; Shaywitz, J. (2020). <i>Overcoming dyslexia</i>. Alfred A. Knopf.</li> <li>Meixner, J.M., Warner, G.J., Lensing, N., Schiefele, U., Elsner, B. (2019). The relation between executive functions and reading comprehension in primary-school students: A cross-lagged-panel analysis. <i>Early Childhood Research Quarterly</i>. 46, 62-74.</li> </ul> <p>Research on brain plasticity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kolb, B., &amp; Gibb, R. (2011). Brain plasticity and behaviour in the developing brain. <i>Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry = Journal de l'Academie canadienne de psychiatrie de l'enfant et de l'adolescent</i>, 20(4), 265–276.)</li> </ul> <p>Research on Oral and Written Language Processing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hulme, C., &amp; Snowling, M. J. (2013). The interface between spoken and written language: developmental disorders. <i>Philosophical transactions of the Royal Society of London. Series B, Biological sciences</i>, 369(1634), 20120395. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2012.0395">https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2012.0395</a>.</li> </ul> <p>Seidenberg, M. S. (2018). <i>Language at the speed of sight how we read, why so many can't, and what can be done about it</i>. Basic Books.</p>
I.A.1.f	Research on the importance of a play approach in early literacy instruction	<p>International Reading Association and National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1998, May). <u><i>Learning to read and write: Developmentally appropriate practices for young children</i></u>. NAEYC Position Statements.</p> <p>Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2022). <u><i>Research Brief: The Intersection of Play and Learning in the Early Grades</i></u>.</p> <p>Moses, L., &amp; Torrejon Capurro, C. (2023). <u><i>Literacy-based play with young emergent bilinguals: Explorations in vocabulary, translanguaging, and identity work</i></u>. <i>TESOL Quarterly</i>.</p> <p>Regional Educational Laboratory . (2020, May 13). <u><i>Integrating play into literacy instruction: Strategies for your classroom</i></u>. Institute of Education Sciences.</p> <p>Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). <i>Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes</i>. Harvard University Press.</p>
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