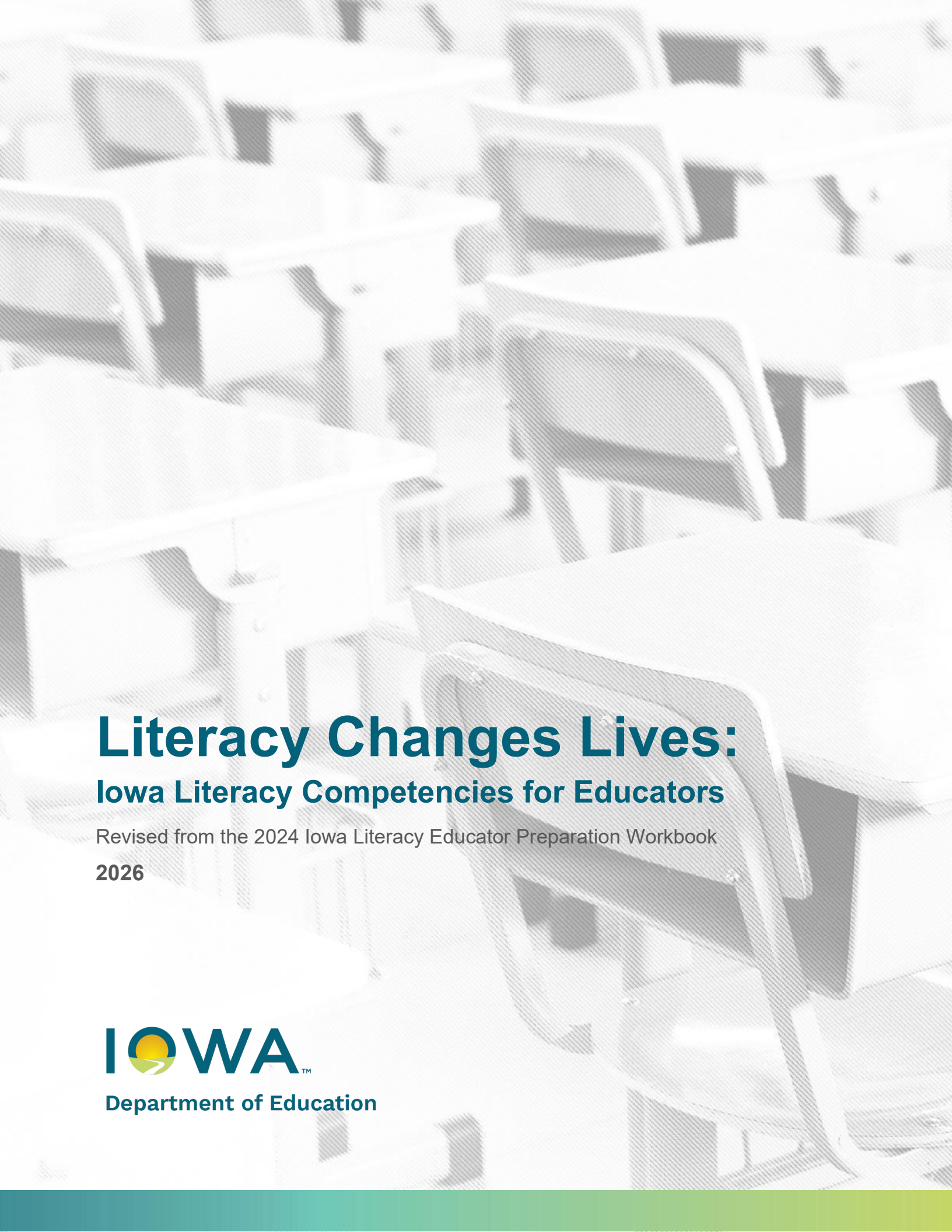


Literacy Changes Lives:

Iowa Literacy Competencies for Educators

Revised from the 2024 Iowa Literacy Educator Preparation Workbook

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IOWA™

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Introduction

The Department's mission is to ensure all students experience a world-class education. A component within this mission is the goal to "Equip Iowa's future workforce with a strong foundation in literacy by increasing the percentage of students who proficiently read and comprehend grade level material."

Literacy Changes Lives: Iowa Literacy Competencies for Educators was developed to provide clear and specific expectations for reviewing literacy curriculum for designated endorsement areas within Iowa educator preparation programs. It is intended to support consistent implementation of literacy requirements across preparation programs to ensure that educators are prepared to provide literacy instruction aligned with the Science of Reading.

This document builds upon the *Iowa Literacy Educator Preparation Workbook* (Workbook), developed in 2024 in response to House File 2545 as part of the Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan. The Workbook was a tool that provided guidance on literacy content for educator preparation programs to incorporate into their curriculum and was intentionally designed through alignment with Iowa Administrative Rules, the Iowa Academic Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy, the Iowa Department of Education's Science of Reading Definition, the International Dyslexia Association's Knowledge and Practice Standards, the Foundations of Reading assessment, and other state and national resources.

Building on that foundation, the Educator Quality team developed this review tool to establish specific literacy preparation requirements as part of the program review process, with the Department using qualified experts with experience in literacy education to review programs on a regular cycle. The review considers the use of acceptable background materials, objective measures of candidate knowledge and the extent of instructional time and opportunities for practice and application in the field. The requirements reflect current, scientifically based reading research and were informed through extensive collaboration with literacy experts, K-12 and higher education literacy consultants, educator preparation faculty, the Iowa Reading Research Center, the Iowa Dyslexia Board, the Iowa Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (IACTE) Literacy Leadership Team, other Iowa literacy stakeholders and technical assistance from the CEEDAR Center and The Reading League.

Programs should carefully consider whether sufficient classroom instructional time is dedicated to each essential literacy component, with at least 7–8 hours focused on phonemic awareness, 8–9 hours on phonics, 4–5 hours on fluency, 6–7 hours on vocabulary and 9–10 hours on comprehension, along with sufficient opportunities for candidates to practice and apply these skills in field experiences with individual students and groups of students.

The Department recognizes that literacy research continues to evolve. Accordingly, educator preparation programs should maintain processes for monitoring emerging evidence and updating curriculum to reflect current research and effective instructional practices. The Department will continue to review and refine these requirements as the research base develops. In the meantime, the CEEDAR Center offers Innovation Configurations documents that can serve as a resource.

Iowa Literacy Competencies for Educators

1. Foundations of Literacy Development

A knowledgeable educator demonstrates their understanding of the foundations of literacy development.

Number	Competency
1.1	**Literacy Development** a. Understand the progression of literacy development reflected in the Iowa Academic Standards for Literacy, including the reciprocal relationships among reading, writing, speaking, viewing and listening, and the relationships among phonemic awareness, decoding, word recognition and spelling. b. Understand how the brain learns to read, including typical and atypical reading development. c. Understand the major theoretical frameworks, including the Simple View of Reading, Scarborough's Rope, the Four-Part Processor, Ehri's Phases, the Simple View of Writing and the Writing Rope. d. Understand the connection between language and literacy, and the multiple layers of language required for successful reading and writing: ● Phonology (speech sounds), ● Orthography (print/graphemes that represent sounds), ● Syntax (sentence structure/parts of speech), ● Semantics (meaning), ● Understanding (background knowledge) and ● Morphology
1.2	**Legislation** Demonstrate familiarity with the statutory requirement that programs shall not include instruction or practical application that is designed to teach students using the instructional model commonly known as the three-cueing system.
	[Optional Extension] Resources and History ● Demonstrate familiarity with resources on the Iowa Department of Education website including the Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan, the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences practice guides and the Science of Reading Defining Guide. ● Understand the history of reading instruction that has influenced policy and curricular changes, including the influence of public media, "reading wars," the Science of Reading and the fields that contribute to the evidence base (i.e., psychology, linguistics, neuroscience and education).

2. Knowledge of Diverse Reading Profiles – "The Who"

"Literacy success for all is the defining human right of the 21st century, regardless of zip code, ethnic origin, dialect or language" (The Reading League [TRL], 2022). Educators are equipped with dispositions that support just treatment of all students, including:

Number	Competency
2.1	**Supporting Students with Language Differences** a. Differentiate linguistic scaffolds to support students from diverse ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, including English learners. b. Utilize resources to deepen understanding of English language varieties other than General American English and languages other than English, including languages with different orthographies (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Russian), and apply this knowledge to inform evidence-aligned literacy instruction.
	[Optional Extension] BICS and CALP Recognize the importance of home language related to the acquisition of Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency in literacy development.
2.2	**Content and Disciplinary Literacy** Implement content-area and disciplinary literacy practices that develop the language comprehension strands of Scarborough's Reading Rope.
2.3	**Supporting Students with Learning Difficulties** Identify and meet the diverse learning needs of students experiencing literacy and learning difficulties, including students with dyslexia, by adapting instruction to support working memory, attention, executive function while promoting students' cognitive, emotional, and social development.

3. Structured Literacy Instruction – "The How"

Structured Literacy is a clear, systematic and research-based approach to teaching reading and writing. It focuses on helping children understand the structure of language, which is especially helpful for struggling readers and those with dyslexia. It's designed to teach all students the skills they need to become strong readers and writers by breaking down the learning process into manageable steps (p. 46, Iowa Comprehensive State Literacy Plan).

An educator skilled in literacy instruction is able to:

Number	Competency
3.1	**Evidence-Based Teaching Principles** Deliver **explicit, systematic and sequential instruction** with modeling, step-by-step guided practice, planned scaffolding, immediate formative feedback and cumulative review for mastery.
3.2	**Multimodal Instruction and Assistive Technology** Apply multimodal, receptive and expressive approaches to teach encoding and decoding through reading, spelling, writing and oral language instruction. This includes the appropriate selection, implementation and evaluation of assistive technology.
3.3	**Instruction** a. Implement effective classroom management and grouping configurations as it applies to literacy instruction, creating a physical environment that is low risk and fosters positive socio-emotional engagement in literacy. b. Deliver instruction with science of learning principles (e.g. begin lessons with clearly stated objectives, review prior knowledge, use clear/concise language, use a brisk, engaging pace with frequent, instructionally relevant student responses and interactions). c. Identify the importance of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM). Understand the process for internalizing curricular materials, implementing HQIM with fidelity and critically analyzing materials for differentiation.

4. Structured Literacy Instruction – "The What"

4.1 Phonemic Awareness

Number	Competency
4.1	**Knowledge of Phonological and Phonemic Awareness** a. Demonstrate an understanding of the phonological awareness continuum, from larger units of sound (e.g., words, syllables, and onset-rime) to smaller units (e.g., phonemes) and the development of skills across this range. b. Demonstrate the ability to explicitly teach phonemic awareness, with an emphasis on the critical skills that support decoding (e.g., phoneme isolation, blending, segmenting). c. Apply instructional supports (e.g., articulatory phonetics mouth shapes, place/manner of articulation, visuals, mirrors, manipulatives, tactile cues, and active/multiple response strategies) to scaffold learning for English Learners and students with phonemic awareness difficulties.

4.2 Phonics and Orthography for Decoding and Encoding

Number	Competency
4.2	**a. Phonics Knowledge** 1. Demonstrate understanding of phonics terminology and concepts (e.g., phoneme, grapheme, digraph, diphthong, schwa, r-controlled vowel, and approaches to syllable analysis). 2. Demonstrate an understanding of concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, letter-sound correspondences, and the relationship between speech and print (including print-to-speech and speech-to-print instructional approaches). 3. Demonstrate the ability to pronounce, classify and compare consonant and vowel phonemes given their corresponding graphemes and can *specifically articulate* how the individual sounds are represented by numerous specific *spelling patterns*. **b. Spelling and Orthographic Knowledge** 1. Demonstrate deep knowledge of English orthographic patterns and spelling conventions, including how phonological, morphological and etymological information influences spelling. 2. Understand and apply phonics scope and sequences that prioritize the utility, complexity and progression of spelling patterns. 3. Analyze spelling errors to identify instructional needs. **c. Decoding and Encoding Instruction** 1. Understand and apply a range of decoding and encoding strategies for teaching: a. high-frequency words that are regular, partially irregular, or irregular; b. multisyllabic and morphologically complex words, including words with common roots and inflectional and derivational morphemes; and c. words with common consonant-vowel combinations (e.g., CVC, CVCC, CVVC) and inflectional morphemes.

4.3 Fluency/Word Recognition

Number	Competency
4.3	a. Understand the interaction between decoding, fluency and comprehension. b. Implement explicit strategies for accuracy, rate and prosody (e.g., phrase-cued reading, echo reading, repeated oral reading with feedback). c. Understand the role of various types of text, including decodable and grade-level text, to build reading accuracy, automaticity and comprehension.

4.4 Vocabulary

Number	Competency
4.4	**Vocabulary Knowledge** a. Recognize the role of vocabulary knowledge in oral and written language comprehension. b. Apply a variety of instructional strategies to teach across the tiers of vocabulary based on instructional goals, text demands and student needs. c. Apply knowledge of morphology, including prefixes, inflectional and derivational suffixes, Latin roots, and Greek combining forms, to support decoding, spelling, vocabulary and comprehension. d. Implement vocabulary instruction that meets the needs of English learners and promotes a language- and vocabulary-rich learning environment, including the use of visuals to support vocabulary development.

4.5 Listening and Reading Comprehension

Number	Competency
4.5	**a. Developing Comprehension Through Listening and Reading** 1. Apply strategies to develop comprehension of spoken and written language, including strategies that support comprehension before, during and after listening and reading. 2. Use instructional strategies to support word, sentence and passage level comprehension, including critical thinking and analysis skills. 3. Use routines to foster comprehension for each major genre: informative/explanatory, narrative and opinion/arguments, including literal, inferential and evaluative levels of comprehension. **b. Deep Comprehension** 1. Understand the role of background and vocabulary knowledge in comprehension and how discourse, verbal reasoning and text structures support comprehension, including disciplinary and content-area literacy. 2. Understand the role of inferencing, figurative language and idioms in developing deeper comprehension. 3. Apply close listening and close reading strategies to support comprehension of increasingly complex spoken and written language.

4.6 Written Expression

Number	Competency
4.6	**a. Writing Development** 1. Understand developmental stages of writing (e.g., scribbling, letter-like forms, pattern letter strings, phonetic spelling and conventional spelling). 2. Apply principles for explicit handwriting and keyboarding instruction, including manuscript and cursive letter formation, pencil grip, handwriting fluency and assessment **[Optional Extension] Transcription** Understand transcription as the integration of handwriting/keyboarding and spelling to support writing fluency with provided words, sentences or text to develop skills apart from idea generation. **b. Sentence, Paragraph and Text Level** 1. Plan explicit instruction to teach students: a. Clear and complete sentence structure including sentence variety and complexity (e.g., sentence frames, sentence expansion and sentence combining) b. Paragraph organization (e.g., topic sentences, supporting details, elaboration, transitions, conclusions and cohesion), c. Text structures (e.g., comparison, sequence and cause and effect) across different types of writing, such as narrative, expressive, persuasive and informational, including the use of mentor texts), and d. editing and revision (e.g., grammar, capitalization, punctuation and usage). **c. Writing Instruction** 1. Explicitly teach the writing process using mentor texts and think-alouds, gradually releasing responsibility from teacher modeling to guided practice and, ultimately, independent writing, with ongoing support through dialogue, feedback, and peer response. 2. Understand how to engage students in writing for a variety of purposes (e.g., to inform, explain, persuade, narrate, entertain, reflect and learn) and use the characteristics of effective writing for different genres, audiences and tasks. 3. Understand the features of effective writing, including organization, generating ideas, gathering information, text structure, writing craft, word choice, sentence construction, transcription and conventions. 4. Understand appropriate uses of technology throughout the writing process (e.g., word processing, speech-to-text, digital planning tools and revision, editing and feedback tools).

4.7 Oral Language

Number	Competency
4.7	**Oral Language Knowledge** a. Explain the role of oral language in the development of reading and writing for all learners, including how to assess and teach oral language for English learners using a comprehensive language development curriculum. b. Implement explicit instruction that develops students' oral language, listening, speaking and communication skills, including the perception and production of new speech sounds, particularly for English learners.

4.8 Varied Texts

Number	Competency
4.8	**Utilizing Varied Texts** a. Understand how selecting diverse texts is crucial for fostering inclusive and equitable education, supporting students' linguistic diversity and overall development. b. Use knowledge of a broad range of genres, text types, authors and formats to teach reading and writing, (e.g. narrative, expository, contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, science fiction, informational text, biography and poetry, including traditional print, digital and online resources). c. Select high-quality texts that are well matched to the instructional purpose and aligned with learning objectives, using decodable texts to support application of taught phonics skills and grade-level texts (e.g. narrative, informational) to provide opportunities for students to engage with rich language, knowledge, and ideas. d. Foster students' motivation, curiosity and positive reading identities through meaningful engagement with high-quality texts.
	[Optional Extension] Language Development ● Demonstrate how interactive read-alouds and purposeful discourse promote oral language development, vocabulary acquisition, comprehension, knowledge building, reading engagement, positive reading identity and meaningful connections among texts, self and the world. ● Use complex texts to intentionally develop students' oral language and academic vocabulary. ● Select and organize texts and text sets to intentionally build students' background knowledge, disciplinary knowledge and conceptual understanding

5. Assessment

Educators are knowledgeable about how assessments guide instruction and know how to administer and interpret assessments.

Number	Competency
5.1	**Assessment Knowledge** a. Understand the purpose and characteristics of assessments within MTSS including defining common terms (e.g., screening, diagnostic, formative, validity, reliability, bell curve, curriculum-based measures, outcome assessment, normed, standardized, scale score, standard score, raw score, and percentile rank). b. Recognize that literacy assessment data for English learners should be interpreted in conjunction with English language proficiency and, when available, literacy assessment data in the student's home language.
5.2	**Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)** a. Understand the characteristics of an effective multi-tiered system of support framework (MTSS). b. Use data to align intervention with Tier 1 instruction and scope and sequence, ensuring coherence across tiers of support.
5.3	**Screening** Know and utilize valid and reliable universal screening assessments to identify students at risk for reading difficulties and utilize the data to select appropriate diagnostic or placement assessments, when needed.
5.4	**Diagnostic Assessment** a. Administer diagnostic assessments to reveal strengths, needs and instructional priorities related to word recognition (e.g., phonemic awareness, decoding, spelling); fluency (e.g., accuracy, rate, prosody); language comprehension (e.g., oral language, vocabulary, listening comprehension, reading comprehension); and writing. b. Interpret data in relation to students' linguistic backgrounds, including home language and dialect, and use multiple sources of evidence to distinguish language or dialect differences from persistent learning difficulties.
5.5	**Assessment Data for Responsive Teaching** a. Utilize multiple data sources (e.g., curriculum-embedded assessments, formative assessments, diagnostic assessments) to create differentiated instructional plans in Tier 1 to minimize students needing intervention. b. Intensify instruction by utilizing group size, instructional time, frequency, dosage, repeated practice, feedback, text complexity, pace and oral language processing opportunities to reduce knowledge gaps. c. Gather and utilize progress monitoring data to measure response to intervention. d. Gather and utilize formative data throughout instruction to move student skills from acquisition to generalization, monitoring data to measure response to intervention.

Number	Competency
5.6	**Communicating Assessment Data** Communicate assessment data to students, parents and colleagues regarding students who may be at risk of not succeeding in school because of the presence of learning challenges such as ADHD, auditory or visual processing, English learners or dyslexia, including communicating with multilingual families using appropriate language supports and translation resources.