
Literacy and Specialty Area Standards for Educator Preparation Policy 5.505

The Background:

The literacy standards included in this policy outline the knowledge that educator preparation providers (EPPs) must equip teacher candidates regarding literacy for early childhood, elementary, and special education specialty area programs.

Since the implementation of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act (TLSA) in 2021 and the passing of T.C.A. § 49-1-229 in 2016, there have been several new expectations for EPPs to ensure teacher candidates are adequately trained for supporting students with reading difficulties.

Changes to these expectations include:

- An understanding of learning disabilities that can impact reading development and skills acquisition;
- The use of appropriate assessments, including universal screeners to determine risk and drill-down assessments to pinpoint root problems; and
- The analysis of multiple types of data to make instructional support decisions for all students based on individualized need within Tennessee's Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) Framework.

To continue improving EPPs' literacy programming, this item proposes the following changes:

- Inclusion of Speech and Language Disabilities eligibility, in addition to Specific Learning Disability in basic reading, reading fluency, or reading comprehension within the content knowledge standards.
- Minor vocabulary shifts to incorporate language of current research literature (e.g., multisensory/multimodal) as well as to mirror the language of TLSA and department guidance.
- The emphasis of screening for characteristics of dyslexia on the development of reading and foundational skills associated with word-level deficits rather than the specific criteria for student support plan eligibility.

These proposed changes will ensure appropriate focus in higher education programming for preparing pre-service teachers for their careers as well as for enriching the knowledge of in-service teachers advancing their degrees and/or certifications.

There have been changes to this item since first reading to make minor grammatical changes

The Fiscal Analysis Impact:

T.C.A. § 49-1-212 requires that the Department prepare a fiscal analysis of any policy, rule, or regulation proposed to the State Board of Education. This item has no financial impact on an LEA.

Policy Justification:

T.C.A. § 4-5-230 requires that justification for adopting an item as a policy instead of a rule be submitted to the chair of the Government Operations Committee. This item is proposed to be adopted as a policy because it defines or explains the meaning of a statute or rule and/or concerns only the internal management of state government that does not affect private rights or privileges.

Connection to the [Master Plan](#):

This item supports the State Board's strategic focus on Literacy and Teachers and Leaders outlined in the Master Plan by ensuring pre-service teachers and teachers pursuing additional endorsements and degrees are equipped with the necessary knowledge base regarding literacy development, instruction, and intervention to support all learners within the classroom setting.

The Recommendation:

The Department of Education recommends approval of this item on final reading. The SBE staff concurs with this recommendation.