Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Standards Concepts and Competencies Guide (4th edition)

Standard 1
Foundational Literacy Concepts

Jennifer Alexander, EdD: Lewis-Clark State College
Sally Brown, PhD: College of Idaho
Heather Castillow, MEd: Brigham Young University – Idaho
Carolyn Cort, MEd: Boise State University
Amanda Eller, PhD: Idaho State University – Twin Falls
Joanne Toevs, MEd: Idaho State University
Jue Wang, PhD: University of Idaho
Whitney Ward, EdS: Northwest Nazarene University

4th Edition Copyright 2026 by
Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Introduction

This document outlines concepts and competencies for the Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Assessment and corresponding coursework for Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Standard 1. It is intended as a guide for both literacy instructors and preservice teachers.

Section 1 states the language of Standard 1. This is part of the Idaho Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel approved during the 2022 Idaho Legislative session, to which teacher preparation programs were to be aligned by July 1, 2022.

Section 2 contains specific Standard 1-based content, concepts, and competencies, off of which the Standard 1 Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Assessment is based.

Section 3 lists key terms and definitions.

Document Usage

Instructors are encouraged to use the list of content, concepts, and competencies as well as the key terms and definitions list when planning their courses.

Students are encouraged to use the list of content, concepts, and competencies as well as the key terms and definitions list as a study guide for the assessment.

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

Section I

Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Standard 1 - Foundational Literacy Concepts

(Applies to the following endorsements: All Subjects K-8; Blended Early Childhood Education/Early Childhood Special Education Birth through Grade 3 and Pre-K through Grade 6; Deaf/Hard of Hearing K-12; Early Childhood Special Education Pre-K-3; Exceptional Child Generalist K-8, 6-12, and K-12; and Visual Impairment K-12.)

The teacher candidate demonstrates knowledge of the following foundational concepts of literacy instruction and their typical developmental progression, oral language, emergent literacy, concepts of print, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, phonics skills, automatic word recognition, orthographic knowledge, fluency, linguistic development, and English language acquisition. The candidate teaches these concepts using evidence-based practices including systematic, explicit, and multisensory instruction. The teacher candidate understands learners with reading difficulties require code-based explicit, systematic, sequential, and diagnostic instruction with many repetitions.

(Idaho Standards for Initial Certification of Professional School Personnel, 2022, p. 5)

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

Section 2

Concepts and Competencies for Elementary Education

In order to support students' literacy development, elementary, special education, and early childhood education teachers are expected to meet the multiple components of the standard. Below, the standard has been broken into sections by sentence. Concepts and competencies related to the component of the standard are delineated. Candidates should be able to demonstrate understanding of the concepts and performance (or knowledge of how to perform) in the competencies.

The list of concepts and competencies includes well-researched and documented information, but is not intended to be an all-inclusive list. A variety of instructional approaches should be researched, depending upon the discipline and the purpose of the instruction. The provided concepts and competencies are intended to be utilized in course design.

Candidate knowledge of the concepts and competencies are additionally assessed in the Standard 1 ICLS Exam.

In order to support students' literacy development, preservice teachers are expected to attain the following minimum competencies:

1. **The teacher candidate demonstrates knowledge of the following foundational concepts of literacy instruction and their typical developmental progression: oral language, emergent literacy, concepts of print, phonological awareness, alphabetic principle, phonics skills, automatic word recognition, orthographic knowledge, fluency, linguistic development, and English language acquisition.**
    a. Understands the components and interactions of the language systems used in reading and writing: phonology, orthography, semantics, syntax, discourse, and morphology
    b. Understands the reciprocal relationship between word recognition skills and language comprehension skills including vocabulary and comprehension
    c. Recognizes the importance of phonemic awareness and phonics in reading and spelling development
    d. Understands the structure of words in English, including:
        - The role of phonological awareness in word and sound awareness
        - The classification of phonemes according to articulation, manner, and place; including the correct pronunciation
        - The role of phonemic awareness in phoneme manipulation
        - The knowledge that words are composed of letters that represent speech sounds—the alphabetic principle
        - The role of graphemes in representing phonemes
        - The structure of English orthography/phonics and its unique patterns and rules for decoding and encoding
        - The role of syntax in word meaning
        - The role of morphemes in word meaning
    e. Demonstrates knowledge of oral language and its typical development

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

f. Articulates oral language's contribution to overall literacy through verbal reasoning, vocabulary, and syntax
g. Understands that reading is not a natural process, and that structured literacy instruction is essential for most and beneficial for all students
h. Understands concepts of print principles, including assessment and instruction
i. Understands the elements of phonological awareness, including: word awareness, rhyming, syllabication, and onset/rhyme
j. Understands the progression of phonemic awareness:
    - Identifying beginning phonemes
    - Identifying ending phonemes
    - Identifying medial phonemes
    - Deleting and adding phonemes
    - Substituting phonemes
k. Understands that the most effective instruction for reading and spelling focuses on the phoneme level
l. Understands the alphabetic principle and describes evidence-based practices for supporting students' development
m. Understands orthographic mapping and phonics instruction
n. Understands the impact of word recognition skills on reading fluency.
    - Fluency consists of accuracy, rate, and prosody.
    - Fluency influences word recognition
    - Fluency supports comprehension
    - Articulates effective fluency instructional techniques
n. Understands that different languages, language variations, and dialects impact phonology and orthography.
o. Understands that these variations are assets and honors the home language of students

2. **The candidate teaches these concepts using evidence-based practices including systematic, explicit, and multisensory instruction.**
    a. Understands that structured literacy includes instruction that is explicit, systematic, cumulative, diagnostic, and uses multi-modal practices as appropriate for the grade.
    b. Emphasizes blending and segmenting in phonemic awareness instruction.
    c. Includes encoding activities in instructional routines.
    d. Recognizes that synthetic phonics instruction is evidence-recommended and follows the focus of structured literacy.
    e. Recognizes that analogy and analytic phonics instruction is helpful, but not sufficient as the only phonics instruction.
    f. Recognizes that embedded phonics instruction is not supported by research.
    g. Includes decodable texts in instructional routines to support phonics development.
    h. Identifies and applies evidence-based practices to develop oral language through activities like:
        a. Vocabulary building
        b. Conversational turn-taking
        c. Shared reading
        d. Dialogic reading

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

   i. Supports decoding of multi-syllabic words through teaching common syllable types, syllable division principles, and affixes (-ed, -ing, etc.)
   j. Distinguishes between high frequency, irregular, and sight words.
   k. Describes adjustments necessary for language variations, dialects, and multilanguage learners.

3. **The teacher candidate understands learners with reading difficulties require code-based explicit, systematic, sequential, and diagnostic instruction with many repetitions.**
   a. Understands learners with reading difficulties require a structured literacy approach with increased intensity and opportunities to practice, according to student needs.

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

Section 3

Terminology

Term	***Definition***
accuracy	Recognize or decode words correctly
affix	A suffix or prefix attached to a base word, stem, or root
aliteracy	The idea that a student is able but chooses not to read
alliteration	A phrase or line of speech in which the same beginning sound is repeated in two or more words *Example: big burly bears bashed berry baskets*
alphabetic principle	The concept that letters of the alphabet represent the sounds of spoken language
analogy phonics	A phonics approach that uses a known rime to learn / practice a new word *Example: sat, mat, rat*
analytic phonics	A phonics approach that uses word parts (phonemic, orthographic, and morphologic) to learn a new word *Examples:* ● *Phonemic: mat, run* ● *Orthographic: flsz rule or the cat/kite rule* ● *Morphologic: sign, signal*
automaticity	Ability to read words quickly and accurately
base word	A word in which prefixes and/or suffixes are added *Example: the base word of "unwholesome" is "whole"* **See also: root word*
blends	Two or three consonants that can appear at the beginning or end of words **Every sound represented in a blend is pronounced.** *Examples: bl, cl, fl, sl, gr, tr, pr, scr, sp, sn*
choral reading	Oral reading in unison with another person or person to improve fluency
closed syllable	A syllable that contains a short vowel sound and ends with or is "closed" by a consonant sound *Examples: hit, match, rab-bit, hot-dog, fan-tas-tic, in-vest-ment*
cognates	Words in different languages derived from the same root *Example: accident (English) and accidente (Spanish)*
compound word	Words made up of two or more base words (free morphemes) *Examples: backpack, sunflower, drumstick, gingerbread*

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

Term	***Definition***
concepts of print	Understandings about how books are organized (front-to-back page turning, titles, illustrations), how print is oriented on the page (top to bottom, left to right), and features of print such as punctuation and capitalizations **See also Print awareness*
consonant	a speech sound produced by a partial or complete obstruction of the airflow in the vocal tract
consonant -le (syllable pattern)	A final, separate syllable containing a consonant followed by the letters *–le,* pronounced */əl/* *Examples: ca**ble**, sta**ple**, rip**ple,** bun**dle***
decoding	Ability to translate a word from print to speech; using knowledge of sound-symbol correspondences
derivational affix	Affixes added to base or root words that affect the meaning; changes the part of speech *Examples: break, break**able**; pollute, pollu**tion**; agree, **dis**agree; do, **re**do*
developmental spelling (*aka invented spelling*)	Students spelling based upon what they know about the phoneme-grapheme correspondences
dialogic reading	A read aloud approach that includes intentional questioning to facilitate an ongoing dialog about the text. *Example strategies:* ***CROWD** — **c**ompletion, **r**ecall, **o**pen-ended, **W** questions (who, what, when, where, why), **d**istancing questioning prompts* ***PEER** — **p**rompt, **e**valuate, **e**xpand, **r**epeat*
digraph	Two letters that represent one sound *Example: consonant digraphs — sh, ch, th, wh, ph, kn, ck, ng* *Example: vowel digraphs — ai, au, ea, ey, ie, oa, oo (as in book), ui, ow (as in grow)*
diphthong **Pronounced **dif**-thong, not dip-thong*	A complex speech sound combining two vowel sounds into one sliding vowel sound *Examples: oi/oy, oo (as in moon), ou/ow (as in brown)*
echo reading	Oral reading in which the student echoes or imitates the reading of the teacher or partner to improve fluency
Elkonin Boxes / sound boxes	A tool used to develop phonemic awareness by using tokens to represent phonemes within a word; also used to help with spelling by segmenting sounds and connecting them to letters

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

Term	***Definition***
emergent literacy	A period of literacy development ranging from birth to beginning reading
encode	To write or spell a word; the ability to translate a word from speech to print
explicit instruction	Concepts are clearly explained and skills are [directly] modeled, without ambiguity (*e.g., I do, we do, you do*)
environmental print	Print in the environment all around us *Examples: traffic signs, cereal boxes, store logos*
etymology	The study of the origin and historical development of words
fluency	Reading with appropriate rate, accuracy, and prosody/expression **See also accuracy, prosody, and rate*
grapheme	A letter or letter combination that represents a phoneme; can be one, two, three, or four letters in English *Examples: e, ei, igh, eigh*
high-frequency words	Most common words in the English language *Examples: the, was, were, is, to, of, a, and, you*
illiteracy	Inability to read or write
inflected/ inflectional endings	Suffixes that change the tense or number without changing the part of speech *Examples: walk**s**, walk**ed**, walk**ing**; dog**s**, box**es***
implicit instruction	Teaching without directly explaining what is to be taught **Contrasts with explicit instruction*
interactive read-alouds	Engaging students in before, during, and after reading activities during a read-aloud to help students interact with the text
irregular word	A word that does not follow common phonic patterns *Example: Temporarily irregular words — is, know, car, the* *Example: Permanently irregular words — said, eye, who, one*
literacy	The ability to read and write to communicate and receive ideas
long vowels	Long-vowel sounds “say their letter name” Long vowels are marked with a macron *Examples: /ā/, /ē/, /ī/, /ō/, /ū/*

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

Term	***Definition***
morpheme	The smallest meaningful unit in a word ● Bound morpheme: meaningful units in a word that cannot stand alone *Example: Respected has three bound morphemes: re+spect+ed* ● Free morpheme: meaningful unit in a word that can stand alone *Example: Breakfast has two free morphemes: break+fast*
morphemic analysis	The process of analyzing or breaking down a word in terms of its meaning units or morphemes **Also referred to as structural analysis*
morphology	The study of word parts related to meaning
onset	Within syllables, all letters preceding the vowel *Examples: **sp**end; **kn**ow; **str**ing; **b**and* *Not all syllables have an onset (e.g., *ice, ouch, ear*).
open syllable	Syllables that end with a long-vowel sound *Examples: **hi**, **me**, **la**-bor, **o**-pen, b**a**-b**y***
oral vocabulary	The set of words a for which a student knows the meanings when heard (spoken or read aloud) and when speaking to others
orthographic mapping	The brain's process of connecting spelling, pronunciation, and meaning of words to create a mental "map" of words that allows readers to recognize the words instantly
orthography	The conventional writing system of a language, including correct spelling patterns
phoneme	The smallest unit of sound in a word, distinguished by place (lips, teeth, etc.) and manner of articulation (stops, nasals, fricatives, etc.), and voicing *Examples: "step" has four phonemes: /s/ /t/ /ĕ/ /p/; "church" has three phonemes: /ch/ /ur/ /ch/); "quit" has four phonemes: /k/ /w/ /ĭ/ /t/*
phonemic awareness	The awareness of individual sounds in spoken language: the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual phonemes
phonics	An approach to reading and spelling that teaches the relationships between graphemes (letters and letter patterns) and the phonemes (sounds) they represent. Includes using the phoneme-grapheme correspondences to decode (read) and encode (spell) words
phonological awareness	An umbrella term that includes a range of skills related to recognizing and manipulating the sound structures of spoken language, including syllables, onsets, rimes, and phonemes

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

Term	***Definition***
pragmatics	The patterns and systems for language use in social context, including words and gestures
prefix	An affix attached at the beginning of a base word or word root, altering the meaning
prosody	The patterns of rhythm and sound in language; includes intonation, inflection, expression, stress patterns, and phrasing
rate	The speed or ability with which words are recognized automatically
r-controlled sound / r-controlled syllable	A specific sound in which a vowel is immediately followed by the letter 'r' in the same syllable. The 'r' sound changes, or "controls," the vowel sound so that it is neither its typical long nor short sound, creating an entirely new vowel phoneme. Also called a murmur diphthong. *Examples: p**ar**k; g**er**m; b**ir**d; f**or**; ch**ur**ch* An r-controlled syllable contains this specific letter combination. *Examples: p**er**-son; t**ur**-nip; f**ar**-m**er***
rime	Within syllables, the vowel and all letters following the vowel, often called a phonogram *Examples: sp**end**; kn**ow**; str**ing**; b**and***
root word	A word or word part that often combines with other parts to form words. Roots are often of Latin or Greek origin Example: **tele**-**phone** = telephone
schwa /ə/	A vowel sound in English that often occurs in an unstressed syllable, shown phonetically with an upside down "e", /ə/ *Examples: the "a" in "**a**mazing," the "e" in "th**e**", the "i" in "penc**i**l," the "o" in "pil**o**t"*
shared reading	A reading experience that occurs when students join in or share the reading of a book or other text while guided and supported by a teacher. The teacher explicitly models the skills of proficient readers, including reading with fluency and expression. **See also: Interactive read-alouds*
short vowels	Short-vowel sounds are often referred to as *lax,* made with more relaxed vocal cords than the long vowel sounds Short vowels are marked with a breve (e.g., /ă/, /ĕ/, /ĭ/, /ŏ/, /ŭ/)
sight word/ sight vocabulary	Unique to each reader, a sight word has been orthographically mapped in a reader's memory — its spelling, pronunciation, and meaning are securely bonded. These words are recognized automatically and effortlessly in print.

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

Term	***Definition***
sound-spelling	A phoneme/grapheme correspondence *Examples: /ch/ as ch or -tch; /j/ as j, ge, or -dge*
stressed/ accented syllable	The syllable in a word that is given an added emphasis when spoken
structural analysis	The process of analyzing or breaking down a word in terms of its meaning units or morphemes **See also morphemic analysis*
structured literacy	The umbrella term used to describe evidence-based approaches to reading and writing instruction that are explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic, integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing while directly teaching the structure of language at the levels of phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax, semantics, and discourse.
suffix	An affix attached at the end of a base word or word root
syllables	A unit of spoken language that contains a single vowel sound and is often, but not always, surrounded by one or more consonant sounds. It forms a distinct, pronounceable "beat" in a word
syllable patterns (six common types)	1. closed 2. VCe (long vowel-consonant-final e) 3. open 4. vowel team/vowel combination 5. r-controlled 6. consonant +le (final stable syllable)
synthetic phonics	A systematic and explicit method of phonics instruction that begins with individual sounds and teaches the blending of sounds to form words
systematic phonics instruction	Teaching a set of useful sound/spelling relationships in a clearly defined, carefully selected, logical instructional sequence
unaccented/ unstressed syllable	The syllable in a word that gets little emphasis and may have an indistinct vowel sound *Examples: the first syllable in **a**-bout, the second syllable in de-**fi**-ni-tion, or the final syllables in doc-**tor** or ta-**ble*** **See also schwa*
unvoiced (or voiceless)	A sound that, when produced, does not cause the vocal cords to vibrate. *Examples: the t in a**t**; the sh in wi**sh**; the th in tee**th**; the f in li**f**e* Unvoiced/voiced consonant contrasts include these pairs: [/p/ /b/], [/t/ /d/], [/k/ /g/], [/ch/ /g/], [/f/ /v/], [/s/ /z/]

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

Term	***Definition***
voiced	A sound that vibrates the vocal cords when produced *Examples: the d in a**dd**; the th in **th**is; the g in **g**oat; the z in **z**ip*
vowel combination (syllable pattern)	A syllable with a short-vowel, long-vowel, or diphthong sound spelled with a vowel combination, such *ai, ea, ee, oi,* or *oo* *Example patterns: CVVC, CCVVC, CVVCC* *Example syllables: b**ea**t, w**ai**t, spl**ee**n, f**ou**n-t**ai**n*
vowel-consonant *e* (syllable pattern)	A syllable with a long-vowel sound spelled with one vowel letter followed by one consonant and a silent *e* *Example patterns: VCe, CVCe, CCVCe* *Example syllables: m**a**ke, sp**i**ke, fl**u**te*
vowel	A speech sound produced by the unrestricted passage of air through a relatively open vocal tract *Examples: a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y and w (e.g., oy, aw)*
vowel teams	See *vowel digraphs* and *vowel diphthongs*
word	A unit of meaning, may be a single syllable or a combination of syllables and can contain smaller units of meaning within it *Examples: tree, unpack, reptile, telephone*
word families	Phonograms or words that share the same rime *Examples: fast, past, last, and blast; right, might, flight, and bright*
word sorts	A basic word study routine in which students group words, comparing and contrasting across categories

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership

References

Honig, B., Diamond, L., & Guthohn, L. (2018). *Teaching reading sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Academic Therapy Publications.

Idaho State Board of Education, Professional Standards Commission of Idaho, & Idaho State Department of Education. (2022). *Idaho standards for initial certification of professional school personnel.* https://www.sde.idaho.gov/cert-psc/psc/standards/files/standards-initial/Idaho-Standards-for-Initial-Certification-of-Professional-School-Personnel.pdf

International Dyslexia Association. (n.d.) https://dyslexiaida.org/

Moats, L. (2020). *Speech to print: Language essentials for teachers* (3rd ed.). Brookes Publishing Co.

Copyright 2026 by Idaho Higher Education Literacy Partnership