



ESPB Program Approval Process

Teacher preparation lays the foundation for aspiring elementary teachers to teach reading. Standards for what teacher candidates need to know and be able to do are crucial for setting up future teachers for success. The purpose of standards is to set an expectation that all aspiring teachers acquire the same knowledge and skills, aligned to the research, and to promote consistency across all teacher education programs. North Dakota education preparation programs must provide evidence that they are preparing teachers to teach evidence-based reading practices in alignment with the requirements of House Bill 1231 from the 68th Legislative Session.

The Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB) has authority to approve educator preparation programs. ESPB requires that all programs have strong evidence of scientifically based reading instruction and evidence of this will be required as a part of each year's April reporting, beginning April 2025. This process is separate from the seven-year cycle of state approval. The year an EPP submits their SSR as part of the program approval cycle, they will not need to complete April reporting.

Phase 1:

All Educator Preparation Programs completed a survey providing information for syllabi review conducted by reading experts to examine the alignment of content and ensure aspiring teachers have opportunities to learn and practice their skills. This was completed in October 2024. The survey provided information about where standards are addressed in coursework, and the level to which they are addressed. Experts provided a report on how much focus is spent on phonemic awareness, phonics fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. ESPB conducted an analysis of number of required reading courses for each EPP. The date for submission of materials for Phase 1 was October 30, 2024. ESPB will meet with each EPP to ensure understanding and will provide support and clarification as requested. No extensions were granted for submission of Phase 1 materials.

Current Status of Phase 1: ESPB reviewed the state reports submitted by college and universities and developed a report regarding the standard alignment.

Literacy Look for items have been added to a survey that will be sent to completers and administrators (survey sent Spring 2026)

Phase 2: (current requirements)

1. Surveys will be sent to schools and districts who receive pre-service teachers. The surveys will gather information to understand the degree to which pre-service teacher's knowledge aligns with scientifically based reading instruction. (School Year 2025-2027).
2. Student portfolio artifacts may be requested from each EPP to provide evidence of student understanding of scientifically based reading instruction.
3. ESPB will continue to review student reporting on license applications.
4. Beginning in 2025, all program reviews will include an individual trained in how to gauge the implementation of scientifically based reading instruction. This individual will not be part of the EPP but a member of the state literacy team or other expert.
5. ESPB will develop a matrix of standards, coursework, and evidence to include instructional hours addressing each component as well as contrary practices, materials and assessment (three-cueing systems, running records focused on three-cueing, balanced literacy models, guided reading, reading and writing workshop, predictable leveled texts for beginning decoding instruction, and embedded/implicit phonics without systematic and cumulative review). A stakeholder team will examine the information and provide a report.
6. Development of an adolescent literacy team.

Teacher Support

ESPB will provide opportunities for faculty members who teach reading to participate in state-led professional learning opportunities on scientifically based reading practices. A resource toolkit will also be housed on the ESPB website.

ESPB will monitor implementation and successes and report to stakeholders.

Non-Compliance

ESPB has the authority to collect evidence of best practices for continuous improvement. Educator Preparation Programs who are unwilling or unable to implement the science of reading and prepare teachers to teach scientifically based reading instruction may receive conditional approval or non-approval. This status would merit required actions and a timeline for alignment with the science of reading.

Summary

All students in the early grades deserve a teacher who is trained in scientifically based methods so they can become strong lifetime readers. ESPB program approval standards for reading were developed with stakeholder collaboration to adopt reading standards and require evidence to ensure all aspiring teachers have the knowledge and skills necessary to teach reading.