



SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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MASTER OF EDUCATION (M.Ed) IN READING – COMPREHENSIVE EXAM INFORMATION

Comprehensive exam dates and registration information

Visit salemstate.edu/graduate/comps for a list of upcoming test dates and information on how to register for the exam.

Criteria for passing score

- Information included in the essays is clearly derived from course work and readings, as well as educational practice (educational practice includes your practicum and pre-practicum experiences, as well as your teaching experience). *It should be clear that your thinking about exam topics is guided by theory and research evidence. When research and theories are cited, they should be explained in detail to demonstrate depth of understanding.*
- A wide variety of courses, readings, and experiences are cited. *One or two sources should not dominate all of the essay responses.* It is clear your reading and experience are broad (e.g., not simply influenced by one single theorist, reading, course, or experience).
- Responses to essay questions demonstrate the ability to integrate information from a variety of sources.
- Conventions of writing are observed in regard to sentence structure, paragraphing, spelling, and punctuation.
- Citations are accurate (names of authors and titles of books/articles are sufficient) and clearly related to the essay topic.

Note: Exams are read by faculty members in the program. If the faculty member reading your exam is considering a grade of "F," a second faculty member reads the exam. If there is agreement, the student re-takes the exam after receiving feedback from the readers.

Tips on Studying

For the comprehensive exam you will write three essays in response to three broad questions. These essays should demonstrate 1) that your thinking about literacy topics is guided by sound theory and research evidence, 2) depth of understanding of the research and theory cited, 3) broad knowledge of the field indicated by a variety of research and theory, rather than only one or two sources, and 4) an ability to integrate and apply academic knowledge, course content, practicum and pre-practicum experiences, and your classroom teaching experience to issues related to literacy and schooling.

To study for this exam, you should review all of the class notes and course texts from your program. Think about the research, theory, and experiences you've had in the program and consider those that have influenced your thinking and your educational practices. Certain program assignments provide particularly good preparation for the exam and these should be reviewed carefully. These include the final exam in EDU 727, the case study in EDU 745A, the evidence-based rationale for the strategy unit in EDU 729, and comprehensive exam preparation work in EDU 845 (and EDU 940 if you take the course).

One study idea to help organize and remember information is to create an annotated bibliography of sources that have shaped your thinking, organized by topic. Or you might create index cards with

categories (e.g., assessment) and associated information, as well as index cards with the names of researchers and theorists (and associated information such as summaries of research or theory, book or article titles, etc). You could then do a card sort (matching categories with theorist/researcher cards) or you might use the cards to talk through the information with a study group.

A note of caution: If you choose to cite specific literacy related programs used in schools, be very careful to consider the research evidence related to that program. Citing programs as influences, instead of theory or research evidence, is not recommended. For a review of the evidence related to specific reading programs, please visit whatworks.ed.gov.

Consider that In *Improving Literacy in America: Guidelines from Research*, the authors claim there is a wide gap between research and teaching practice, largely due to the fact that educational researchers assume that teachers “cannot or will not use” research findings “to guide their practice” (Morrison, F, Bachman, H., & Connor, C, 2005, p. 149). Instead teachers turn “to descriptions and interpretations of research spoon-fed by publishers of textbooks, scripted uniform curricula, and watered-down articles in flashy magazines” (p. 149). Your comprehensive exam should prove Morrison, Bachman, and Connor wrong.