



Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators®



GACE® Study Companion

Literacy Specialist

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About the Assessment

Assessment Name	Literacy Specialist
Grade Level	K–12
Test Code	560
Testing Time	2 hours 30 minutes
Test Duration	3 hours
Test Format	Computer delivered
Number of Selected-response Questions	95 selected-response questions
Question Format	The test consists of a variety of short-answer questions such as selected-response questions, where you select one answer choice or multiple answer choices (depending on what the question asks for), questions where you enter your answer in a text box, and other types of questions. You can review the possible question types in the <i>Guide to Taking a GACE Computer-delivered Test</i> .
Number of Constructed-response Questions	2

The Literacy Specialist assessment is designed to measure the professional knowledge of prospective Literacy Specialists in the state of Georgia.

The testing time is the amount of time you will have to answer the questions on the test. Test duration includes time for tutorials and directional screens that may be included in the test.

The questions in this assessment assess both basic knowledge across content areas and the ability to apply principles.

The total number of questions that are scored is typically smaller than the total number of questions on the test. Most tests that contain selected-response questions also include embedded pretest questions, which are not used in calculating your score. By including pretest questions in the assessment, ETS is able to analyze actual test-taker performance on proposed new questions and determine whether they should be included in future versions of the test.

Content Specifications

This assessment is organized into content **subareas**. Each subarea is further defined by a set of **objectives** and their **knowledge statements**.

- The objectives broadly define what an entry-level specialist in this field in Georgia public schools should know and be able to do.
- The knowledge statements describe in greater detail the knowledge and skills eligible for testing.
- Some tests also include content material at the evidence level. This content serves as descriptors of what each knowledge statement encompasses.

See a breakdown of the subareas and objectives for this assessment on the following pages.

Test Subareas

Subarea	Approx. Percentage of Test
I. Curriculum and Instruction	37%
II. Assessment	23%
III. Professional Leadership and Specialized Roles	15%
IV. Application	25%

Test Objectives

Subarea I: Curriculum and Instruction

Objective 1: Foundations and Curriculum Design

The beginning Literacy Specialist:

- A. Is familiar with factors that affect literacy development (e.g., medical, environmental, cultural, linguistic, social, and emotional)
- B. Understands the developmental continuum of oral language, phonological awareness (including phonemic awareness), concepts of print, alphabetic principle, decoding skills, printed-word recognition, spelling, reading fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and written expression
- C. Knows characteristics of diverse literacy profiles (e.g., students with dyslexia, gifted and talented, English learners)
- D. Is familiar with design, implementation, and evaluation of the literacy curriculum materials and the role of standards for all students

Objective 2: Instructional Design

The beginning Literacy Specialist:

- A. Is familiar with ways to support classroom teachers and education support personnel to implement research-based instructional approaches for all students
- B. Is familiar with aspects of cognition and behavior in literacy development, including attention, automaticity, verbal memory, processing speed, and graphomotor control and their effects on literacy development
- C. Is familiar with methods to create a literacy-rich environment (engaging classroom library, word wall, authentic children's work, digital technology, reading nooks) that meet the specific needs, interests, and abilities of diverse learners

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- D. Knows strategies that foster students' engagement, increase desire to read, and promote growth as readers
 - E. Knows strategies to support the language needs of English learners
 - F. Understands how to individualize instructional materials and approaches to meet the needs of students who need additional support with literacy skills

Objective 3: Implementation

The beginning Literacy Specialist:

- A. Is familiar with instructional approaches that support the development of reading strategies required for different types and forms of texts (i.e., digital and print, disciplinary literacy)
- B. Understands research-supported instructional approaches and interventions for concepts of print
- C. Understands research-supported instructional approaches and interventions for phonological (including phonemic) awareness
- D. Understands research-supported instructional approaches and interventions for alphabetic principle, phonics, high-frequency words, decoding, and encoding
- E. Understands research-supported instructional approaches and interventions for morphological analysis (e.g., affixes, roots, and base words)
- F. Understands research-supported instructional approaches and interventions for vocabulary
- G. Understands research-supported instructional approaches and interventions for fluency
- H. Understands research-supported instructional approaches and interventions for listening and reading comprehension (e.g., text dependent questioning, close reading)
- I. Understands research-supported instructional approaches and interventions for use of writing mechanics and written expression

Subarea II: Assessment

Objective 1: Types and Purposes of Assessment

The beginning Literacy Specialist:

- A. Understands the function and purpose of formal and informal assessments, including screening measures, to determine the literacy needs of the student (i.e., diagnostic, progress monitoring, and measuring outcomes)

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- B. Knows basic technical vocabulary associated with assessments (e.g., criterion-referenced, norm-referenced, reliability, validity, fairness, and equity)
 - C. Understands how to select, administer, and interpret appropriate assessments for students, especially for those who need additional literacy support

Objective 2: Interprets Data for Instruction

The beginning Literacy Specialist:

- A. Understands how to analyze individual reader's performance using multiple data sources and plan instruction and intervention
- B. Understands how to analyze and use assessment data to examine the effectiveness of specific intervention practices and students' responses to instruction
- C. Knows ways to support teachers in analyzing and using individual, classroom, grade-level, and school wide assessment data to make instructional and grouping decisions
- D. Understands how to analyze and present assessment data according to the needs of students, parents, and school members
- E. Knows how to promote student reflection and self-efficacy through goal setting

Subarea III: Professional Leadership and Specialized Roles

Objective 1: Diverse Learners

The beginning Literacy Specialist:

- A. Is familiar with the relationship between first- and second-language acquisition and literacy development and ways to support educators in meeting the unique needs of English learners
- B. Knows how to refine educator practice in providing differentiated instruction for all students
- C. Knows ways to promote family and community engagement to support literacy development

Objective 2: Professional Development and Leadership

The beginning Literacy Specialist:

- A. Understands how to model and support teachers in using data to inform practices to meet the diverse literacy needs of students
- B. Is familiar with effective collaboration and conflict resolution strategies that facilitate communication and literacy improvement

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- C. Knows methods to collaborate in planning and facilitating professional learning for individuals and groups of teachers using data to enhance the quality of literacy instruction. This may include working individually with teachers (e.g. modeling, co-planning, co-teaching, and observing) or with groups (e.g. teacher workshops, group meetings, and online learning)
 - D. Is familiar with how to provide evidence that supports effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders, including parents and guardians, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and community members
 - E. Knows methods to collaborate with leadership teams in order to support multi-tiered systems of support and advocate for students who are at risk for not reading and writing at grade level

Subarea IV: Application

Objective 1: Professional Leadership

The beginning Literacy Specialist:

- A. Will apply knowledge of professional learning and leadership to prepare an organized written response to a topic related to the development of student literacy

Objective 2: Analysis of Individual Student Case Study

The beginning Literacy Specialist:

- A. Will apply knowledge of reading assessment and instruction to prepare an organized written response to a case study of an elementary student

Practice Questions

The practice questions in this study companion are designed to familiarize you with the types of questions you may see on the assessment. While they illustrate some of the formats and types of questions you will see on the test, your performance on these sample questions should not be viewed as a predictor of your performance on the actual test. Fundamentally, the most important component in ensuring your success is familiarity with the content that is covered on the assessment.

To respond to a practice question, choose one of the answer options listed. Be sure to read the directions carefully to ensure that you know what is required for each question. You may find it helpful to time yourself to simulate actual testing conditions. A correct answer and a rationale for each sample test question are in the section following the practice questions.

Keep in mind that the test you take at an actual administration will have different questions, although the proportion of questions in each subarea will be approximately the same. You should not expect the percentage of questions you answer correctly in these practice questions to be exactly the same as when you take the test at an actual administration, since numerous factors affect a person's performance in any given testing situation.

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1. A science teacher asks the school reading specialist for strategies to help students acquire content-area vocabulary and improve their comprehension of the science textbook. Which of the following strategies is most appropriate for the reading specialist to recommend for this goal?
- A. Introducing key vocabulary terms in context before reading the text
 - B. Selecting words from the text and having students write down definitions from the glossary
 - C. Pretesting students on the vocabulary terms from the textbook
 - D. Comparing the dictionary definitions of the vocabulary terms with the definitions found in the textbook glossary

Answer and Rationale

2. A reading specialist collects data at four-week intervals on several third-grade students. The data indicate that the students' accuracy, fluency, and comprehension are at an end-of-first-grade level. The reading specialist is most likely to recommend focused instruction in which of the following?
- A. Developing a sight-word vocabulary
 - B. Rehearsing the 42 alphabet sounds
 - C. Reading a variety of texts from various genres
 - D. Teaching phonics explicitly, followed by the use of decodable text

Answer and Rationale

-
3. Which of the following best describes the concept of fairness in educational measurement?
- A. The idea that test takers with equal proficiency in the construct being measured should have the same probability of answering a particular test question correctly
 - B. The idea that test results are consistent over time and across test questions
 - C. The idea that a test taker's performance should be assessed based on the constructs being measured and not on the test taker's group membership
 - D. The idea that a test should measure what it purports to measure

Answer and Rationale

4. Students in elementary school often have a wide range of reading abilities. Which of the following approaches will best meet the needs of all students?
- A. Establishing three ability-level groups for each subject
 - B. Using the same text for all students but modifying assignments
 - C. Asking the reading specialist to work with the reading group that has the lowest ability level
 - D. Using flexible grouping and a variety of materials to provide additional support to students

Answer and Rationale

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5. A mentor teacher notices that during English language arts instruction, a new teacher asks many recall questions related to a novel the class is reading. The mentor teacher plans to suggest a few higher-order thinking questions that would be appropriate. Which of the following questions best reflects how point of view can affect a story?
- A. What would happen in the story if the antagonist were the main character?
 - B. Who are the memorable characters appearing in the first three chapters?
 - C. How successful was the protagonist in dealing with the problem in the story?
 - D. Why did the author choose the particular setting for the story instead of another place?

Answer and Rationale

6. A teacher is working with a small group of students on phonological skills and has students verbally replace the first letter of the word “pill” with each of the following letter pairs: “sk,” “fr,” and “dr.” On which of the following phonological skills is the teacher most likely focusing?
- A. Phoneme segmentation
 - B. Phoneme addition
 - C. Phoneme manipulation
 - D. Phoneme isolation

Answer and Rationale

-
7. Which of the following strategies does a teacher build into a read-aloud to ensure students practice a selected strategy during reading?
- A. Preplanning questions
 - B. Highlighting the text
 - C. Summarizing sections
 - D. Chunking the text

Answer and Rationale

8. A reading specialist is collecting data on a kindergarten student's knowledge of phonemic awareness skills. The reading specialist asks the student, "Which word does not belong: 'man,' 'mat,' 'hat,' 'mad'?" Which of the following phonemic awareness skills is the teacher assessing?
- A. Deletion
 - B. Categorization
 - C. Substitution
 - D. Segmentation

Answer and Rationale

-
9. After a four-week cycle of reading intervention targeting blending words with consonant blends (CCVC), several students are not making adequate gains. To help the students succeed, the best step that the teacher can take is to focus intervention on which of the following?
- A. Segmenting words with consonant blends
 - B. Maintaining students' attention
 - C. Blending words with variant vowels
 - D. Blending CVC words

Answer and Rationale

10. A fifth-grade teacher conducts a whole-class lesson on methods of citing textual evidence before students read a passage and write a response to it. The teacher explains that if students incorporate any evidence from the passage into their response, they should have a reason to do so. Which of the following best identifies the primary rationale for a student to use a direct quotation when responding to the passage?
- A. To add credibility and authority to the response
 - B. To focus on a specific source cited in the passage
 - C. To communicate an overview of the information in the passage
 - D. To provide supporting facts and details for a claim

Answer and Rationale

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11. Which of the following activities is most appropriate to use with emergent readers who are in the early stages of developing their phonemic awareness skills?
- A. Identifying rhyming word pairs in poems, songs, and stories
 - B. Clapping out the syllables in words from around the classroom
 - C. Stretching out the phonemes in three-syllable words
 - D. Counting the number of words in short sentences

Answer and Rationale

Word in Text	Teacher's Recording of Student Responses (written phonetically)
bigger	bī jər
even	ěv ěn
recess	rĕk ěs
inside	ĩns ید
accident	ăk ید ěnt
interrupt	ī tər ũpt
skeleton	skĕ lĕt ɔn

12. A third-grade student makes the errors listed while orally reading a passage. Based on the information, on which of the following word-analysis skills should the teacher focus instruction to best meet the student's needs?
- A. Consonant blends
 - B. Phonemic awareness
 - C. Syllabication
 - D. R-controlled vowels

Answer and Rationale

cab	in
ca	per

13. A reading teacher uses the preceding letter boxes as a visual aid to help students understand the difference between closed and open syllable types. Which of the following will best ensure that the students learn the distinction?
- A. Changing the color coding of the letter boxes to colors that students agree to associate with closed and open
 - B. Providing additional word pairs such as “level/legal” and “visit/vital” for the students to contrast
 - C. Including words starting with the /a/ sound found in words such as “away” and “against”
 - D. Having students examine words that fit into three or more boxes and contain a different syllable type

Answer and Rationale

14. During a fifth-grade literature circle unit, students in each circle choose a novel to study and work together to complete various activities. Which of the following activities best empowers students to demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the novel they read?
- A. Taking a fill-in-the-blank or cloze test created by the publisher of the novel they selected
 - B. Keeping a personal reflection journal of reading performance while reading their novel
 - C. Designing art for a new cover for their novel to display in the library and entice others to read it
 - D. Creating a Web site with multiple organized sections to house information about each circle’s novel

Answer and Rationale

-
15. After a student completes a reading fluency assessment, the teacher notes that the student can read the passage correctly, without hesitation, and at an appropriate pace. However, the student does not demonstrate expression while reading. The student needs further instruction primarily in
- A. prosody
 - B. speed
 - C. automaticity
 - D. decoding

Answer and Rationale

16. A group of teachers are compiling a bank of strategies that struggling students can use to develop their reading comprehension skills. Which of the following is the best student strategy to add to the bank?
- A. Practicing silent reading for a prescribed length of time each day
 - B. Performing frequent oral reading fluency exercises with the class
 - C. Listening to a text while reading it and forming mental models
 - D. Studying lists of content-specific vocabulary and completing word maps

Answer and Rationale

-
17. Which **THREE** of the following are the most important factors for a teacher to consider when planning differentiated instruction to maximize learning for all students in a literacy class?
- A. Assessing students' mastery and application of a wide range of literacy skills
 - B. Using a variety of evidence-based instructional approaches to learning
 - C. Planning fast-paced instruction to spark and maintain student interest
 - D. Employing flexible grouping and regrouping practices
 - E. Adapting assignments to meet the needs of a diverse student population

Answer and Rationale

18. Mr. Santos, a fifth-grade teacher, meets with the building reading specialist to share concerns about a paraprofessional assigned in a language arts class. Mr. Santos describes the paraprofessional, Ms. Stanley, as hovering over the four students who have Individualized Education Programs, watching their work, and constantly correcting them. He is concerned that while he is implementing a guided instructional approach to probe students' thinking with questions that require literary analysis, the paraprofessional is interfering with the students' learning processes of response, review, reflection, and adjustment. Which of the following instructional approaches best fits the needs of the paraprofessional as the reading specialist plans for her professional development?
- A. Small-group instruction
 - B. Gradual release of responsibility
 - C. Differentiated instruction
 - D. Project-based learning

Answer and Rationale

-
19. Which of the following is the most significant impact that early attainment of decoding skills has on a student's literacy development?
- A. Enhancing a student's motivation to read curriculum-based texts during times allotted to independent reading
 - B. Enabling a student to organize cooperative reading activities involving texts on topics of shared interest
 - C. Serving as a strong predictor of a student's later success in meeting the level of proficient in reading comprehension
 - D. Allowing a student to process complex texts at the same reading rate as is used to process texts at more accessible levels

Answer and Rationale

20. At the beginning of a school year, a group of classroom teachers are looking over assessment data from the previous year with the reading specialist. They notice that some students in each class scored lower than expected. Which of the following actions will best help the students during the upcoming school year?
- A. Placing similar-scoring students in skill groups for acceleration
 - B. Retaining students who historically score low on assessments
 - C. Tutoring students in each area of need individually
 - D. Switching lower-scoring students to classrooms with higher-performing teachers

Answer and Rationale

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21. A third-grade teacher asks a reading specialist for help with grouping students. The teacher and reading specialist discuss data from curriculum-based reading assessments and standardized reading scores from an online reading program. Which of the following types of assessments will be most effective for providing data for placing students for small-group instruction?
- A. An interim assessment that measures students' readiness for a future test
 - B. An interim assessment that measures students' self-evaluation skills
 - C. A summative assessment that measures students' retention of content
 - D. A formative assessment that measures students' word-reading accuracy

Answer and Rationale

22. Members of the staff at an elementary school comprise a curriculum development team that is to conduct an in-depth analysis and revamping of the school's literacy program. During the planning and development phase of the project, which of the following is the best first step for the team to take?
- A. Developing a multi-grade-level scope and sequence document and a curriculum map
 - B. Analyzing state and national standards to formulate a philosophy and rationale for a revised curriculum
 - C. Recruiting trainers and mentors responsible for professional development sessions using new curriculum materials
 - D. Reviewing local, state, and national test data and stakeholder survey results to guide the selection of a curriculum

Answer and Rationale

-
23. Which of the following is the best way for a reading specialist who plans and facilitates professional learning sessions to collaborate with a group of teachers?
- A. Selecting professional literature that teachers must read
 - B. Observing lessons and writing evaluations for teachers
 - C. Structuring meetings during which teachers focus on goals
 - D. Encouraging the principal to meet with teachers resistant to change

Answer and Rationale

24. Of the following, which is the most effective way for a reading specialist to empower classroom teachers and educational support personnel to implement evidence-based instructional approaches?
- A. Encouraging personnel to join the International Literacy Association
 - B. Providing coaching for staff members as the need arises
 - C. Observing staff as they locate resources about recommended practices
 - D. Testing students every two to four weeks to measure their progress

Answer and Rationale

Answer Key and Rationales

Question Number	Correct Answer	Rationale
1	A	<p>Option A is correct. Although there is no single method for providing explicit vocabulary instruction, teachers must help students improve their ability to construct word knowledge within a meaningful context.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
2	D	<p>Option D is correct. Poor accuracy indicates poor decoding, and accurate decoding is what leads to fluency and comprehension. Teaching phonics explicitly followed by the use of decodable text is the cornerstone of effective reading instruction.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
3	C	<p>Option C is correct. “Fairness” is a technical term used in educational measurement that refers to the idea that construct-irrelevant, personal characteristics of a test taker (gender, ethnicity, religion, race, etc.) should have no appreciable effect on test results or the interpretation of test results.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>

Question Number	Correct Answer	Rationale
4	D	<p>Option D is correct. Flexible grouping is a teaching strategy that allows for student placement in various groups based on factors such as skill need, interest, or personal choice. The flexible groups may change on a daily basis or may exist for several days or more. Using a variety of literary materials in different genres at various reading levels also addresses a wide range of reading abilities within a classroom.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
5	A	<p>Option A is correct. Asking what would happen if the antagonist in the story were the main character requires students to evaluate the character and that person's actions and infer how the story would be different if the antagonist were the main character. It requires students to consider how point of view affects a story and how knowing more about an antagonist can change a reader's opinion of the antagonist.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
6	C	<p>Option C is correct. The teacher is focusing on the advanced skill of manipulating phonemes by having the students delete the /p/ in the word "pill" and substitute the phonemes "sk," "fr," and "dr" to form new words.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>

Question Number	Correct Answer	Rationale
7	A	<p>Option A is correct. Preplanning questions allows for strategic placement and timing as well as higher-order thinking.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
8	B	<p>Option B is correct. In phoneme categorization, students must listen to words and identify which one has a sound that is different from those of the other words.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
9	D	<p>Option D is correct. After CVC words, look at words that have two consonants in the initial or final position of a word. It is more effective for students to move from CVC words to CCVC words to learn blends because the only difference between a CVC word and a CCVC word is one extra consonant.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>

Question Number	Correct Answer	Rationale
10	A	<p>Option A is correct. Directly quoting from an author’s text indicates to a reader that the author’s words are powerful or highly informative. By quoting an author, a student indicates a belief that the author writes from a perspective of high authority and that the author’s reputation gives credibility to the supporting evidence in the student’s written response.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
11	A	<p>Option A is correct. Distinguishing rhymes is one of the most basic skills an emergent reader needs to have in order to develop phonemic awareness. All other phonemic awareness skills build off this concept.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
12	C	<p>Option C is correct. The errors indicate that the student has difficulty applying syllabication rules to unknown words. The focus of further instruction should be helping the student decode multisyllabic words by learning ways to split a word into its syllables. Such ways include stopping between two middle consonant sounds, such as /g/ and /g/ in “bigger,” and before a single middle consonant sound, such as /d/ in “accident.”</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>

Question Number	Correct Answer	Rationale
13	B	<p>Option B is correct. The word pairs are designed to compare and contrast closed and open syllables. Students must examine many pairs of words to firm up their understanding of each syllable type.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
14	D	<p>Option D is correct. Creating a Web site with multiple sections requires the students to demonstrate in-depth knowledge about various story elements while showing organizational skills. These are higher-order processes, and they also give students the chance to engage in twenty-first-century learning.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
15	A	<p>Option A is correct. Prosody is the ability to read with expression and appropriate tone.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>

Question Number	Correct Answer	Rationale
16	C	<p>Option C is correct. The ability to listen to a text while reading it and form mental models or schema removes the effort involved in decoding and gives students the opportunity to analyze rich text.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
17	B, D, E	<p>Options B, D and E are correct. Option B is correct because in providing differentiated instruction, it is important for a teacher to use multiple strategies that are selected to best meet specific needs. Option D is correct because it is best practice for a teacher to use a combination of whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction when planning differentiated instruction. Option E is correct because it is best practice for a teacher to adapt assignments that students should complete based on their learning needs.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
18	B	<p>Option B is correct. The method described by the teacher who expressed concern (guided instruction) is the second stage of gradual release, and the paraprofessional is directly interfering with this phase of instruction.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>

Question Number	Correct Answer	Rationale
19	C	<p>Option C is correct. Research has shown that students who acquire good decoding skills early are much more likely to be successful in reading for understanding as they progress through the grades.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
20	A	<p>Option A is correct. After reviewing the data, teachers can adjust small-group instruction based on student need.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
21	D	<p>Option D is correct. Formative assessments are used to guide reading instruction, and in this case, it is the only option that would be used to group children for guided reading.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>

Question Number	Correct Answer	Rationale
22	B	<p>Option B is correct. The review and revision of a literacy curriculum begins by analyzing state and national standards. Focusing on establishing standards for what students should learn is a first step in creating the philosophy and rationale that will serve to guide the development of a revised curriculum.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
23	C	<p>Option C is correct. The reading specialist working collaboratively with teachers provides structure by helping the teachers focus on goals.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>
24	B	<p>Option B is correct. Students make the most literacy growth when the reading specialist provides help or coaching to classroom teachers and support personnel as they implement evidence-based instruction and when all school personnel work together as a team.</p> <p><i>Back to Question</i></p>

Constructed-response Questions

The Literacy Specialist test consists of two constructed-response questions that require the candidate to demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge and theory of reading to specific students' needs and classroom scenarios.

Each task will be scored on a 0–3 scale using the following general scoring guide.

Scoring Guide

Readers will assign scores based on the following scoring guide.

Score	Description
3	<p>Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the elements of reading and reading instruction relevant to the question.</p> <p>A response in this category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Clearly and specifically answers all parts of the question in a way that directly addresses the instructional situation described.Shows strong knowledge of concepts, theories, facts, procedures, or methodologies relevant to the question. Any errors of fact or terminology are minor and do not detract from the thorough understanding shown.Provides strong supporting evidence and rationales.
2	<p>Demonstrates general understanding of the elements of reading and reading instruction relevant to the question.</p> <p>A response in this category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Adequately answers most or all parts of the question in a way that is appropriate for the instructional situation described.Shows general knowledge of concepts, theories, facts, procedures, or methodologies relevant to the question. Any errors of fact or terminology do not detract from the general understanding shown.Provides adequate supporting evidence and rationales.

Scoring Guide (continued)

Score	Description
1	<p>Demonstrates a weak or limited understanding of the elements of reading and reading instruction relevant to the question.</p> <p>A response in this category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Answers some part (or parts) of the question at a basic level.• Has one or more of the following weaknesses:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Fails to answer most parts of the question and/or fails to address crucial aspects of the instructional situation described– Shows weak or limited knowledge of concepts, theories, facts, procedures, or methodologies relevant to the question. The weakness may be indicated by errors or misconceptions.– Any evidence or rationales provided are weak or limited
0	<p>Demonstrates no understanding of the elements of reading and reading instruction relevant to the question.</p> <p>A response in this category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fails to respond appropriately to any part of the question• Shows no knowledge of concepts, theories, facts, procedures, or methodologies relevant to the question; or any information presented about reading and reading instruction is seriously in error. <p>Note: The mere presence of reading-specific words or phrases that might be used in an adequate response does not by itself indicate knowledge.</p> <p>Also receiving a score of 0 would be responses that are blank, completely off-topic, or not written in English.</p>

Constructed-response Practice Question

This constructed-response question illustrates the kind of question in the test. It is not, however, representative of the entire scope of the test in either content or difficulty. Sample answers with commentary follow the question.

General Directions

Directions: Read the scenario and then respond to the **TWO** tasks. The suggested time to spend on this question is 10 minutes.

Scenario

At the beginning of the school year, the professional staff in a K through 5 school meets to review the results of test data collected during the previous year to identify the specific literacy needs of the school's diverse student population. Following an analysis of students' strengths, weaknesses, and needs, the staff decides to organize itself as a professional learning community that will focus on ways to improve student literacy learning. The school's literacy specialist is assigned the leadership role in guiding the staff toward meeting their goal.

Tasks

- 1) Identify and describe **THREE** principles characterizing an effective professional learning community.
- 2) Identify and explain the benefit of **TWO** strategies the literacy specialist can use in collaborating with teachers to enhance the quality of literacy instruction.

Sample Responses and Rationales for Practice Question

Sample Response Earning a Score of 3

Task 1:

A school's implementation of professional learning communities (PLCs) is intended to establish a schoolwide culture and environment of high trust in which a focus is built on planning and sustaining school improvement goals. One fundamental principle inherent in creating successful PLCs is that leaders in the process need to encourage all participants to work together collaboratively, rather than in isolation, to achieve a common goal—analyzing and improving classroom practices. The basic belief underlying this principle is that participants need to share responsibility for furthering students' literacy development. Second, effective PLCs ask participants to respond to a continual review of student test data to judge the effectiveness of what is happening in the classroom and change instructional practices when needed. Also, a major focus of PLCs is related to providing teachers multiple opportunities to share their teaching practices and observe each other in the classroom. This practice helps teachers to make connections with each other, discuss ideas, and build on each other's teaching expertise.

Task 2:

There are a number of strategies the literacy specialist can use to collaborate with a teacher or a group of teachers. One technique is to provide scheduled times for the literacy specialist to model literacy lessons so that teachers can directly observe effective instructional strategies. Modeling “how to teach” helps teachers to learn first-hand what good practice looks like and then include the techniques in their own daily instruction. The literacy specialist can also plan scheduled times on the school calendar to conduct teacher workshops. During these workshops the specialist facilitates interactive professional learning activities related to various aspects of literacy instruction. This strategy allows teachers to learn new information, dialogue with each other about literacy instruction, and reflect upon their current teaching practices and how to improve.

Commentary on a Response that Received a Score of 3

This sample received a score of 3 because every part of both tasks is clearly and specifically addressed. In Task 1, the test-taker identified three basic principles inherent in a model of professional learning communities: encouraging teachers to work collaboratively rather than alone in furthering students' literacy growth, engaging in continual review of student test data and using the information to modify instructional practices when appropriate, and providing opportunities for teachers to make connections with peers and build on their own professional expertise by sharing ideas and observing other teachers. In Task 2, the test-taker thoroughly identified and explained the benefit of two literacy strategies the literacy specialist can use in collaborating with teachers: modeling literacy lessons for teachers and planning scheduled times for facilitating teacher workshops on a variety of literacy topics. This response demonstrates a thorough understanding of the elements of reading and reading instruction.

Sample Response Earning a Score of 2

There are a number of principles that define professional learning communities as a way for a school to improve its instructional program in helping students learn literacy skills. Three of these underlying big ideas are the following:

Professional learning communities are a way for a leadership team to encourage teachers to gain greater expertise in the “how and why” of teaching literacy skills.

The communities represent an ongoing process involving a team of administrators, content specialists, and teachers who work collaboratively with a focus on improving instruction for students with differing needs.

A professional learning community is composed of a group of people in a school who have a shared vision of learning and strive to learn new and better ways to enhance students’ literacy development.

Mr. Watson was assigned the role of planning and facilitating professional development activities. Some activities he can use are:

Setting up times for classroom teachers to observe each other teaching literacy lessons

Reviewing current scientifically based research findings on literacy instruction and posting the materials online for teachers to study.

Commentary on a Response that Received a Score of 2

This sample received a score of 2 because most parts of the question are addressed but at a general level. In Task 1, the test-taker adequately identifies three principles that characterize professional learning communities: 1) PLCs are a mechanism allowing teachers to gain expertise in literacy instruction, 2) PLCs involve a group of school-based stakeholders in a variety of positions who work collaboratively to improve instruction for all students, and 3) Members involved with PLCs share a common vision of learning and work to learn new and more effective ways to help students improve their literacy skills. In Task 2, the test-taker provides two strategies the literacy specialist can use when working with teachers—teacher observation of peers and access to online resources related to latest research findings in literacy instruction. However, the response is partial because an explanation of the benefit of having teachers engage in the activities is not provided. This response gives a general understanding of the elements of reading and reading instruction relevant to the question.

Sample Response Earning a Score of 1

A professional learning community is a way for teachers to get together in groups to discuss how they are teaching students in their classrooms. They use the time the administration gives them to share ideas and then include new ideas in their lessons. A literacy specialist should meet with teachers and give them information about new techniques.

Commentary on a Response that Received a Score of 1

This response received a score of 1 because some parts of the question were answered at a weak or limited level. In Task 1, the test-taker provides an incomplete description of one principle (teachers working together in groups to discuss and share teaching ideas) that characterizes professional learning communities. In Task 2, the test-taker describes at a very limited level one strategy the literacy specialist can use (meeting with teachers and giving them information about new techniques) in working collaboratively with teachers to improve student achievement. An explanation of the strategy is not provided. This response demonstrates a weak or limited understanding of the elements of reading and reading instruction relevant to the question.

Preparation Resources

The resources listed below may help you prepare for the GACE assessment in this field. These preparation resources have been identified by content experts in the field to provide up-to-date information that relates to the field in general. You may wish to use current issues or editions of these materials to obtain information on specific topics for study and review.

Guide to Taking a GACE Computer-delivered Assessment

This guide explains how to navigate through a GACE assessment and how to answer different types of test questions. This free download is available in the Test Preparation Resources section of the GACE website at [**www.gace.ets.org/prepare**](http://www.gace.ets.org/prepare).

Reducing Test Anxiety

This guide provides practical help for people who suffer from test anxiety. Designed specifically for GACE test takers, but useful to anyone who has to take tests, this guide reviews the major causes of test anxiety and offers practical advice for how to counter each one. Download this guide for free from the Test Preparation Resources section of the GACE website at [**www.gace.ets.org/prepare**](http://www.gace.ets.org/prepare).

Study Tips: Preparing for a GACE Assessment

This document contains useful information on preparing for selected-response and constructed-response tests. The instruction, tips, and suggestions can help you become a better-prepared test taker. See the Test Preparation Resources section of the GACE website at [**www.gace.ets.org/prepare**](http://www.gace.ets.org/prepare) for this free download.