Key Concepts Covered in M.Ed. – Elementary Education Comprehensive Exam

The exam consists of multiple-choice questions.

Comprehensive Exam Key Concepts

M.Ed. – Elementary Education

Literacy, Language, and Reading Instruction

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Phonological Awareness & Phonics	Phoneme blending; letter–sound correspondence; decoding; word families; manipulating sounds and letters.
Structured Literacy	Explicit, systematic, cumulative instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, spelling, and language.
Fluency & Prosody	Accuracy, automaticity, appropriate rate, phrasing, and expression; repeated oral reading and fluency supports.
Vocabulary & Context Clues	Oral vocabulary growth; meaningful context clues; morphology and word meanings; vocabulary and comprehension.
Word Study & Sight Words	Word patterns, word sorts, high-frequency words, orthographic mapping, and automatic word recognition.
Emergent Literacy	Print awareness, early reading and writing experiences, language development, and developmental readiness.
Reading Comprehension & Response	Prior knowledge, schema, inference, reader-response theory, meaning-making, and comprehension monitoring.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Pre-Reading & Graphic Organizers	Activating background knowledge; selecting organizers to preview, predict, and structure information.
Multilingual Learners & Language	Code-switching; supportive language and literacy instruction for English learners; oral language scaffolds.
Reading Assessment & Intervention	Screening, diagnostic and formative evidence; interpreting decoding/automaticity patterns; planning targeted instruction.

Writing, Communication, and Instructional Design

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Writing Processes & Organization	Planning, drafting, revising, and organizing ideas; using models and graphic organizers.
Writing Genres & Purposes	Narrative and other writing forms; matching text structure and features to purpose and audience.
Writing Rubrics & Feedback	Age-appropriate criteria; concrete guiding questions; descriptive feedback; rubric-based scoring.
Writing–Reading Connections	How writing strengthens phoneme–grapheme knowledge, vocabulary, sentence construction, and text structure.
Language Structures	Syntax and word order; morphology as units of meaning; communication and oral presentation.
Differentiated Instruction	Adjusting content, process, products, and learning environment to address readiness, interests, and learning needs.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Scaffolding & Zone of Proximal Development	Temporary instructional supports; guided practice; gradual release; Vygotsky's zone of proximal development.
Bloom's Taxonomy & Application	Recognizing cognitive levels and selecting learning tasks that move beyond recall to application and reasoning.

Mathematics Content, Pedagogy, and Problem Solving

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Nature of Mathematics	Mathematics as reasoning, patterns, relationships, communication, and problem solving.
Five Strands of Mathematical Proficiency	Conceptual understanding, procedural fluency, strategic competence, adaptive reasoning, and productive disposition.
Conceptual vs. Procedural Knowledge	Knowing why mathematical procedures work as well as how to execute them; connecting representations.
Problem Solving vs. Exercises	Distinguishing unfamiliar problems from routine exercises based on the learner's prior knowledge.
Mathematical Reasoning & Proof	Asking students to justify claims, explain strategies, and support conclusions with evidence.
Problem-Solving Instruction	Productive struggle, discussion, student-created problems, prior knowledge, and multiple solution strategies.
Concrete to Representational to Abstract	Manipulatives, drawings, and symbols matched to students' developmental understanding.
NCTM Principles & Standards	Role of mathematics standards and principles in equitable, coherent, effective instruction.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Mathematics Assessment & Reteaching	Pre-assessment; diagnosing misconceptions; responding to classwide errors; using evidence to adjust instruction.

Assessment, Data, and Instructional Improvement

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Assessment Purposes	Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessment; assessment before, during, and after instruction.
Validity, Reliability & Trustworthiness	Whether assessments measure intended learning and produce consistent, useful results.
Standardized Assessments	Purposes, limitations, interpretation, responsible preparation, and teacher responsibilities.
Norm-Referenced Assessment	Comparing a student's performance with a reference group; appropriate interpretation.
Assessment as Inquiry	Collecting evidence, interpreting learning, making instructional decisions, and evaluating results.
Work Samples, Logs & Portfolios	Using authentic student products, teacher logs, and observation records to document growth.
Rubric-Based Scoring	Clear performance criteria, scoring consistency, and actionable feedback.
Assessment Communication	Sharing appropriate assessment information with students, families, and relevant school personnel.

Learning Theory, Development, and Student Motivation

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Cognitive Learning Theories	Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, and cognitive views of learning; distinguishing behaviorism.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Piaget & Developmental Readiness	Children's developmental thinking; choosing concrete materials and age-appropriate tasks.
Schema & Prior Knowledge	Mental structures used to organize experience, make predictions, and understand new information.
Intrinsic & Extrinsic Motivation	Interest and enjoyment versus external rewards; promoting sustained engagement.
Learning by Discrimination	Recognizing differences between stimuli, patterns, or categories.
Incidental Teaching & Student Initiative	Using student-initiated interests and naturally occurring opportunities for instruction.
Positive Learning Environments	Supportive relationships, clear expectations, engagement, and meaningful learning.
Bullying Prevention	Recognizing repeated harm involving a power imbalance; safe, proactive school responses.

Professionalism, Ethics, Equity, and Educational Foundations

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Reflective Teaching	Examining lessons and evidence, maintaining reflective records, and improving practice.
Ethics & Law	Professional obligations, ethical expectations, and distinctions between what is required and what ought to be done.
Teacher Licensure & Tenure	Certification requirements, professional credentials, tenure, and procedural protections.
Due Process & Employment Notice	Timely notice and procedural fairness in employment-related decisions; distinguish legal doctrines.

Study Topic	What to Know / Review
Froebel & Educational History	Friedrich Froebel's role in developing kindergarten and child-centered early education.
Multicultural Education	Culturally inclusive texts and curricula; equity, prejudice reduction, and respect for diverse experiences.
Effective Schools & Teacher Attitudes	High expectations, collaboration, engaged learning time, and positive attitudes toward students and families.
Professional Learning & Organizations	Benefits of subject-area associations, collegial networks, and continuous improvement.
General Classroom Accessibility	Removing physical and instructional barriers so students can participate in ordinary classroom learning.
Tiered Academic Support (RTI)	Universal core instruction, targeted small-group support, and data-informed instructional decisions.
Instructional Technology & Simulations	Using simulations and digital tools to represent experiences and strengthen learning.